

**LETTERS FROM
APPLEHURST**



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LETTERS FROM APPLEHURST

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BY
Walter
G. W. HINCKLEY

AUTHOR OF

"ROUGHING IT WITH BOYS", "THE GOOD
WILL IDEA", ETC.



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LETTERS FROM APPLEHURST
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m. b. f. 1, Jan. 11-24,

To the memory of "Life Member, Manhattan"
I dedicate this volume.

G. M. H.

Preface

For a number of months each issue of the Good Will Record carried this statement at the head of the first column on page three:

“In April, 1917, the editor of the Record left his office and went to a little farm he calls Applehurst. He had two objects in view, viz: First to build up his nervous system; and second to do his “bit” toward preventing a food shortage later in the year. He wrote letters while there, and a few of them were printed. He still continues to write to his friends.

Most of the letters were written to Mr. M. H. Leavens, a New York business man, whose generosity to the Good Will homes and schools at Hinckley, Maine, was credited each month in the “Cash Column” to

LIFE MEMBER MANHATTAN

It was farthest from my thought that the letters would ever be put into permanent form; but after a time there were requests that this be done. And hence this volume preserving them in the order in which they appeared.

G. W. HINCKLEY.

Hinckley, Maine.

1923

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Letters from Applehurst

LETTER I

My dear daughter:

I suppose you heard several weeks ago that I have enlisted. Too old to tread the deck of a battleship and not eligible for military training on account of age or previous experience, I have become a member of another wing of Governmental service. I really enlisted April 28th. There were no formalities of physical examination to see if I were "fit"; there was no registration or anything else that would take time; I simply entered the service.

When war was declared I thought I would write Governor Milliken and offer my services; I had the letter all formulated in my mind and it read as follows:

"To His Excellency Governor Milliken:

"I understand that there is great need of men, munitions and farm products; I am not eligible for enrollment in military service, but if there is anything that I can do you will find me watching for orders and ready to obey."

But the more I thought of it, the more certain I became that such a letter would only be a bother and nothing would come of it anyway; fully convinced of this I made a sudden move to Applehurst. I depended upon Mr. Walter Price, Farm Manager, and W. P. Hinckley, Secretary of Good Will Home Association, to do certain things for me. As you know, I

am about three quarters of a mile from my office and I have not been off these premises since I arrived, nearly four weeks ago. Through the above mentioned gentlemen I purchased a span of horses—"Tweedle dee" and "Tweedle dum"—a set of new harness and a supply of commercial fertilizer. I have all the seeds that I will need, but I have had to put in quite a hustle for these. I paid twelve dollars per bushel for seed beans, which makes the beans cost something less than a cent apiece, and I hope to sell at least thirty-six dollars' worth next fall in order to get my seed back.

Then I had a very exciting time getting three bushel of buckwheat to sow; there was none in the vicinity; by telephone I learned that there was none in Bangor and none in Portland in the seed stores; Bangor told me that I might possibly get some of a seed firm in New York City. Then I said I would have some buckwheat anyway, so, I appealed to W. F. Cobb & Co., Seedsmen, Franklin, Mass. They had sold out but thought they could get me some. I said I was good for three bushels and to have it sent immediately; in the meantime I had written to Aroostook County to a personal friend, to send me from three to six bushels if he could get it; I was bound to get that seed somewhere. My friend writes me that he has shipped me three bushels; I have heard from the other parties so now I have nine bushels of buckwheat on hand when I need only three; but think of it, buckwheat at three dollars per bushel!

You may have the use of the house here when you arrive in June. It is my plan to pitch a tent in the

orchard between two apple trees where I will be surrounded by fields of beans and potatoes; where I can hunt the tent caterpillar and watch the arrival of the potato beetle; where I can pat the horses on the neck each morning and tell the hired man—a Good Will boy—what to do and see that he does it. You will find “Old Glory” in front of the house when you arrive; the croquet ground will be green and trimmed and the little garden on the north side of the house will be doing its best.

You may tell Esther that the birds are having more or less trouble in the Balm of Gilead tree. Mr. and Mrs. Bluebird visited the tenement about three weeks ago. Mr. Bluebird thought the surroundings were very agreeable and that they could not do better for themselves and family for the summer. Mrs. Bluebird said that she met Mr. and Mrs. Wood-Swallow, who occupied the house last Summer, and had quite an interview with them in Florida last December. The Wood-Swallows said that they no longer regarded the house in the Balm of Gilead a desirable rent; that it was all right last year, until one beautiful day when the Porter family—man, woman and three children—arrived all at once, and from that time on there was no end of noise and confusion. Mrs. Wood-Swallow had declared that the boy in the family had a small express cart which he used constantly and often it rattled and squeaked; that the girl, who was a little older, spent a great deal of time on the croquet ground, right under the tenement, knocking wooden balls about and often screaming; the effect upon the little Wood-Swallows was anything but beneficial.

I didn't hear Mrs. Bluebird say this to Mr. Bluebird but she said something, and if she did not say that what did she say? Anyway, Mr. and Mrs. Bluebird decided to go to another tenement up in the orchard. About a week ago Mr. and Mrs. Wood-Swallow arrived from the south and after twittering for some time decided that they would run the risk for the summer; perhaps the Porters would not come anyway. Every thing was happily decided and arranged when yesterday Mr. and Mrs. English Sparrow arrived upon the scene. They told Mr. and Mrs. Wood-Swallow that they were not going to occupy the tenement, as they did not want it, but they did not want Mr. and Mrs. Wood-Swallow to occupy it either; neither did they want the Bluebird family there, and they just wanted to make all the trouble that they possibly could. Mr. and Mrs. Wood-Swallow were very much agitated, and I could see that Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow were making themselves very unpopular. Of course I did not hear the Sparrows say it, but they said something, and if they did not say that what did they say? Last night Mrs. Wood-Swallow was sitting on a limb of the Balm of Gilead in a brown study; she seemed very despondent and unsettled in her arrangements for the summer.

You will arrive too late for the early Summer flowers of which there is great abundance, but you will find the hill-top green and beautiful.

With love and best wishes to all,

Affectionately yours,

LETTER II

Mr. M. H. L.—

New York City.

My dear Mr. L—:

I am wondering if your memory is as good as mine. I have been mindful every day for several weeks that I told you I would soon write you a letter so long that you would cry, "stay thy hand." But I have just reached the date when I can write the letter. You will see from the heading that I am neither at the Good Will office nor at my home, but at Applehurst. Applehurst is a distinct proposition; it is a place by itself, and stands out distinctly in my interest and affection. I told the Good Will boys and girls, the other morning, that Willow-Wood was my winter residence and that Applehurst was my summer and suburban home. The difference between the two is this; at Willow-Wood I can see five or six houses at a time while at Applehurst I can see only one.

Perhaps you recall that summer thirteen or fourteen years ago, when I had apparently overtaxed my nervous system and suffered a complete breakdown; the collapse came on Commencement morning about fifteen minutes after I had delivered the diplomas to a graduating class. The Trustees and Directors of the Good Will Home Association and other personal friends were very kind to me. Bermuda and Clifton Springs and various other resorts

were proposed but I insisted upon it that there was just one way out of my difficulties, and explained that, if I should go into the Maine woods for a few weeks and have some young man for a companion, I was morally certain I would regain my health and nerve-poise and be back at my post of duty in due time.

Henry C. Blake, a former Good Will boy, who had just completed his first year in college, was chosen for a companion. My friends had a doctor fit me out with a supply of medicine, and Blake and I started for the Moosehead region. When we were ready to leave the landing in our rowboat for the little journey to the point where we were to pitch our tent, I told Blake that I wanted to go back to the settlement a whole man; that if I went back thinking that I had regained my health, I wanted to feel sure that it was nature's recovery and that I had not been temporarily built up on drugs. Thereupon I dropped the vials of medicine into Wilson pond and so far as I know they are still there.

Six weeks of camping, rowing, swimming, fishing and good fellowship, seems to have done all I could ask, so we returned home.

The day after my arrival home I went into the office and thought I would take up my work again but something seemed to run up and down my spinal cord; my nerves quivered and I broke—not as severe as the breaks that had driven me out of the office, but of the same nature. I reached the conclusion then and there that I would probably never enter the Good Will office for duty again. I walked out into the open and said: "I must find something to

do.” It was August and I went into the field and ploughed. It was great to hold the plough on an August day and hear the coulter rip the green turf and to follow it across the field, and then, bareheaded and barefooted, swing back for another furrow, and keep it up hour after hour. It helped and so did the other outdoor activities, but I was simply trying desperately to get into trim for my work and that very fact seemed to retard recovery. Thus I was forced to the conclusion that I would probably never return to the office anyway, and I conceived a business proposition which greatly pleased me.

Did I ever tell you how I went into the jelly business? In those days the pure-food laws had not been enacted. Raspberry jelly, for instance consisted of a percentage of coloring matter, acid, glucose and water, and sometimes a very small percentage of fruit juice; other jellies were not much better. It was in October when I chanced to see a woman making some preserves, and it occurred to me that I could be of real service if I could develop a “from kitchen to consumer” jelly business. As soon as I had grasped the idea I discovered that it was too late to do anything that year; the fruit season was past, aside from the fact that a few crab-apples were still available.

I hustled. In my hustle I forgot about the Good Will office and my eagerness to get back my nerves. The scheme was very simple and involved putting twelve tumblers of jelly into a box guaranteeing that said jelly was composed of the following ingredients: fruit juice, granulated sugar and spring water.

The first box that I sent out brought me the full price and sold seven other boxes for me.

But materials were scarce so late in the season, and I could only lay plans for the following year. I studied labels; whenever at a hotel or restaurant, whatever I ordered for a meal I included some kind of jelly just to convince myself that jellies thus served were poor stuff at best, and that I had a clear field before me. In February I put in a preliminary order for jelly tumblers with the understanding that other orders would follow in March, for fall fruits.

One day in March I opened my eyes to the fact that without any effort or planning on my part I had my nerves back, was in the best of health and there was absolutely no reason why I should not take up my chosen work of Good Will again. I dropped the jelly business then and there, and assumed at once the responsibilities of the Good Will office. One morning in May when twelve barrels of jelly tumblers arrived in one shipment, my wife said to me:

“Isn’t this expensive business? These things which are coming to us we haven’t any use for now. What will we do with them?”

I assured the good woman that I was entirely satisfied. Any goods which I ordered when I was in the jelly business I would have to pay for when they came; but the money thus spent would represent the sum total of my medicine bill from the time I collapsed entirely, on Commencement day in June, to the time I returned to my office a restored man the first of March.

Evangelist D. L. Moody used to tell the story of a sinner who, for a long time, was under conviction.

He was burdened with the sense of his sins and could gain no relief day or night. After suffering in mind for many days and finding no relief he crawled under a railroad bridge and prayed; while he was praying under the railroad bridge the burden rolled off and he became very happy. From that time on, according to Mr. Moody's story, this man was fond of telling his fellowmen that if they found themselves burdened with the sense of sin and would crawl under a railroad bridge and pray, relief would surely come to their troubled souls. Mr. Moody used to relate this incident, if I remember rightly, to illustrate how little sense some people exercise in religious matters. Many a time, in the last twelve years, when I have met some fellow mortal suffering from nervous prostration or vainly trying to recover from a nervous collapse, I have said:

"Now if you really want to recover and be as strong as ever, you just go into the jelly business 'from kitchen to consumer'—twelve tumblers for three dollars,—it cured me, why should it not cure you?"

But times have changed; pure food laws are now in operation; not so much glucose, colored with analine dyes and tintured with some kind of acid, is sold for pure fruit jelly as in former years. Besides I don't believe the cure would work with me again, if I should try it. But last March I began to be conscious that I was on the high road to the same condition that I got into thirteen years ago. I had been shut up all winter; a weak ankle had effectually prevented my usual walk from my home to my office

and back, because the snows were deep and I felt the old tremors and quivers returning. I saw that another collapse was inevitable unless I headed it off. A trip into the woods, and a stay there until nature had done her work, would have been my course had we been living in an ordinary year.

But this is not an ordinary year; it is an extraordinary one and some things which a man could have done wisely and happily two years ago, cannot be so happily and wisely done under the present conditions. In April I decided instead of going into the woods I would get my radical change both in activities and in line of thought by leaving the office, taking up my abode at Applehurst and devoting the summer to doing my bit toward preventing a food shortage next winter.

Of course I could not be here alone and so I hired a former Good Will boy. I am the proprietor and he boards with me. I am waiting now for six acres of potatoes which I have planted and four acres of beans and other seeds representing quite a sum of money to show themselves above ground, and to prove my wisdom in coming here instead of going into the woods. The change which I have experienced physically and in my nervous system, surprises me.

You must not think that I have done all the ploughing or all the harrowing, because the six acres planted with potatoes and three of the four planted with beans have been harrowed five times, but I have done my share of it. Just why I should, morning after morning for the last four weeks, wake up at precisely twenty minutes to five by my watch, I can-

not tell. But it naturally follows that I am ready to retire at eight-fifteen in the evening.

I wish you could walk through my little orchard of ninety-six trees today; you would say, as a friend said yesterday, as she walked through it, that it seemed like a veritable fairyland. I hear much about orange groves and the beauty of the orange blossom, but I cannot think that an orange grove can be more charming than a New England apple orchard, when everything would look like a snow bank but for the delicate blush of pink.

I am going to write you another letter in a few days but don't be discouraged; it will not be as long or as irksome or as common-place as this communication.

Very cordially yours,

LETTER III

My Dear Miss G—:

I have not paid as much attention to birds this year as I did in the summer of 1917. I have been somewhat confused and vacillating but have at last reached a solution of a difficult problem in my love for bird life. The problem is stated in a single word; that word, if I will put it into black and white in all its suggestions of feline maraudering, of preying upon fledglings, just out of their nest, is "cats"—just plain, commonplace cats. Nearly all of my neighbors keep cats; it is true I keep a gun, but you know what endless animosities might be stirred if I should shoot a cat. . And so after much meditation and a severe mental struggle to overcome my desire to issue an edict that, wherever there is land in the management of which I can have any voice, all cats must go, I surrender.

Such an edict would banish cats from Good Will Farm, Willow-Wood, Applehurst and Cloverslope, that is, if the edict were obeyed; but think of the heartburnings, the bitterness and the woe. And so I have surrendered. The cats may live—they may live in all but one place. But somewhat removed from all the dwellings in which I have any special interest is a tract of land where there are some birds and where more can probably be encouraged to live. This area, in the vicinity of the "Tenterden Tablets," is to be devoted to bird life and such things.

For a cat to venture on that area will be as dangerous as for a hun to take a stroll in "No Man's Land" or worse, for the cat will stand no chance at all.

I used to enjoy a household cat—more or less. Our old cat "Jim" was the mother of more than twenty kittens in her life time and her descendants are fairly well scattered in Maine and Massachusetts. I think there was royal blood in Jim's veins. I inferred it from the dignified steppings when she crossed the road in front of our house to hunt for young birds, and the still more dignified manner—I would say "lordly" if her sex would admit it—in which she would return with a bird between her teeth.

But one day Jim carried her prowess a step too far—several steps too far. A pair of meadow larks appeared early one spring and I was delighted. If anything could be done in the line of protection I was bound to do it; meadow larks are a delight to my ornithological eye the long season through, and they stay longer than almost any other migratory bird. Oh! if these meadow larks would only nest near us, on our own premises at Willow-Wood, (it was before Applehurst days) I would be happy indeed. After much inspecting of the neighborhood these feathered possibilities of neighborliness decided to locate in the grass-field across the road in front of the house. For weeks the parent birds were busy; they would light in the tall grass close to the road and watch me cautiously until I had passed; they would light on a fence rail and give precisely the same call they used to give a half century ago in Guilford, Conn., and we all knew in those days that they said "You can't see

me.” Some where out in the field, I didn’t know where and I didn’t want to know, they were rearing a nest full: there could be no doubt of that. Then one day Jim stalked out of the grass and across the road with a pomposity that would have been ridiculous were it not dispicable, carrying a young meadow lark in her jaws. When sunset came Jim had brought, in one day, seven birdlings—the whole brood—and deposited them, one at a time, dead as a chimney brick, on the gravelled walk.

Jim is dead. I feared the parent birds would resent the treatment accorded them and never come again, but they liked us so well—all but Jim—that they came the next spring as though no tragedy had occurred; but only think! There should have been at least three pairs, and would have been, no doubt, but for Jim.

But bird tragedies are not all due to feline ferociousness, and even if they were, I would not lay the blame all on the cats, treacherous and unreasoning as they are; the birds are partly responsible. One would think that birds recognizing cats as their mortal enemy, would avoid premises where a cat is known to reside. It is not true however, for robins and sparrows will seek locations for their nests, close to houses where these enemies are harbored.

But listen to this: Last spring a pair of swallows decided to build under the veranda, north side of the house here at Applehurst; they located directly over the door; the nest was so low that I could easily touch it with my hand while standing in the doorway. It was exceedingly interesting to watch them. They seemed to have realized that, on account of the

public position of their nest it must be of the very best quality. A finer example of mud masonry I have never seen; their restless enthusiasm and exhibitions of domestic bliss, as the work proceeded, were beautiful. Each little load of mud had to be discussed, the exact place where it must be located had to be considered and there was great delight, in their little feathered breasts, when each portion was firmly placed.

Then they would twitter about the glad day when the nest would be completed and full of tiny eggs; the gladder day when, in place of the eggs, there would be swallowings (I think that is the word they used) and the climax of it all, when the dear little swallowings, faithfully fed and protected, would at last fill the nest and then fly.

But what happened? Why, one morning there was a cluster of egg shells upon the veranda floor, beneath the nest which showed the period of incubation was over, the swallowings had arrived in the nest, and the shells of the eggs had been cast aside. The parents were very busy for a day or two providing for the family—the mouths so suddenly yawning, the stomachs to be filled.

Then one morning one of the number was found lying dead beneath the nest. It had died in its home and the parents had disposed of the little corpse in this way—just dropped it. My grand-babies—I still call them grand-babies, though they are fast leaving their babyhood behind them—buried the little body with such care and ceremony as, in their immature judgment, the circumstances required, the two older fearing that little Jean might go out

surreptitiously and exhume the remains later, just out of curiosity.

Three days later another little dried-up corpse was found under the nest, and that had to be disposed of in proper manner. Here was the blighting of parental plans; the thwarting of parental dreams and instinct; and then, *miserabile dictu*—"miserable dictu" is a relic of my Latin school days and means "sorrowful to relate"—the real tragedy occurred. About nine o'clock, I think it was, one morning, the mother of my grand-babies heard a fluttering sound—an unusual noise on the veranda—and hastened to see what it might mean. One of the parents, whether Mr. Swallow or Mrs. Swallow, I cannot tell, was hanging from the nest by a long slender thread around its neck. The mother could not liberate it herself, but she sent one of her children on a hurried trip across to Clover-Slope and begged the woman who dwells there to come over and help. The good neighbor hurried, but it was too late to help; seizing the shears she cut the thread, but the bird fell lifeless to the floor. The remaining parent kept about the task—made journey after journey for food for what remained in the nest; and, then, I am supposing that what was left of the little family was big enough to leave its home. So I lost my interest in that corner of the veranda and paid no further attention to it until August twelfth when I chanced to look at it; a spider, the kind I think that, back in Solomon's time, used to "make her way into king's palaces," had covered the beautiful circular entrance to the mud-masonry with a filmy web. That was the end.

But let me tell you that, just as all bird tragedies are not chargeable to cats, so not all attempts on the part of birds to raise families result tragically.

For instance on the twenty-second of August I took a census of our purple martins. I went and tapped on each pole that supported a martin house, and had a man count the birds as they flew out. There were sixty-nine martins, and the next morning I discovered that I had overlooked one bird house; so there must have been eighty purple martins on the premises at that time, at least. I cannot tell how many families of blue birds (*Sialia sialis*) have been reared this summer at Applehurst and at Good Will, but one hears their mellow voices all the time, and they are flying about in little families or flocks of five or six. Partridge were successful in the woods between Good Will and Applehurst; the bobolinks have been much in evidence; for some reason, the bluejays which, in this vicinity, have usually been rather retiring and kept to the deep woods, except in the autumn, became unnecessarily bold and neighborly. A pair of golden wood-peckers had a glorious summer raising a brood of little ones in the deep hole bored by themselves into one of the biggest trees at Willow-Wood, close to my sitting room; black ducks nested along the river bank opposite the Quincy Building; and of all the warblers, thrushes, sparrows, meadow larks, I have no time to tell you, and the exact specie of owls that successfully raised a good sized family in the Pines—a family so noisy o' nights that the boys in the Good Will camp were kept awake, I cannot write.

By the way, do you remember that I used to

preach a sermon on the swallow, and among other things I used to say that while some birds fly on a low level, in their spring and fall migrations, the swallow travels at a great height? I believed the statement to be true or I would not have made it. We see ducks, geese and other birds in their flights, but the swallows are never seen: hence the reasonable conclusion that they travel "away up." That was when birds could fly but man had not taken to wing. Now men are flying, and one aviator reports that ducks, in their migrations usually fly at an altitude of five thousand feet and that plovers journey at about six thousand five hundred feet. Another aviator reports that, while flying at an altitude of nine thousand five hundred feet, he saw flocks of birds high above him, which, by the aid of glasses, he was able to identify. They were swallows. So you may know now, not on my conclusions, but upon the testimony of aviators why we never see swallows and some other birds as they journey north or south of us; they are too high up to be seen.

Cordially yours,

LETTER IV

My dear Miss K.:

Up here at Applehurst, where I have come for the summer, I have two of your recent letters which my assistants in the Good Will office understand I will want to answer. I have read and re-read them, and you have probably wondered why you have received no acknowledgment. The editorial in the last Good Will *Record* explains it but I do not feel sure how carefully you read the editorials. You have probably noticed that there is a difference in folk. Some people never read the editorials; some never read anything but the editorials; I do not know where you belong in this division of humanity. The statement in the last editorial that the editor has ten acres under plough—six acres for potatoes, four acres for beans and about two acres for buckwheat and a garden may have attracted your notice. I presume that “six plus four plus two equals ten” looks like poor arithmetic to you; but the apparent discrepancy is due to an uncertainty as to just how much land I can get ploughed for buckwheat.

On account of your experience with poultry, I have thought of you frequently, of late, as I attempted to manage a lone setting hen for which I paid one dollar—warranted to set. I made two other attempts at raising chicks, since I landed at Applehurst, but the other two were lamentable failures. One of the hens I returned to her former owner;

one hen, although she did a prodigious amount of clucking, which seemed auspicious, declined to brood over the eggs I furnished her, and in a few days she began to lay; she is now laying strictly fresh eggs.

I would not have had anything to do with hens, because I was not attempting general farming and did not intend to reside at Applehurst only a few weeks—just long enough to plant and till and harvest—but for the following reason:

We once employed a man at Good Will who knew everything. I cannot think of anything connected with agriculture which this man did not know; and he knew an amazing lot of stuff which was not true. He built a number of hen houses; these structures were, of course, made in the most scientific, up-to-date, nothing-to-be-added manner. One of these houses has been moved to Applehurst for the accommodation of a former occupant of the place, and it seemed to be just begging for poultry. So I set a hen.

This up-to-date edifice had, among other conveniences for biddies, a row of nests about four feet above the floor; the hens were to approach these nests from the rear; but the roof of the said nests was on hinges and could be lifted by anyone who was in front. Here I placed a Barred Plymouth Rock hen and she at once entered upon her duties. She proved to be a very interesting personality. Each morning, with regularity that was gratifying, biddy would jump down from her nest for food and drink, and in so doing she would flip one egg out of the nest which, with its four-foot fall, would be shattered on the floor. At first I could see no benefit in the

arrangement; but I saw later that there was one advantage though I think only one. If a hen is setting under these circumstances any one can tell, with a little trouble, just how many days she has been there. He has only to enter the hen house, quietly approach the front of the long line of roofed nests, gently move the hen to one side and count the eggs; the difference between thirteen, the number of eggs originally committed to her care, and the number of eggs in the nest shows the number of days she has been sitting. This order of things went on with interesting regularity, amounting to almost a rythm, until there were only five eggs left. But she had six more days to set before the incubation would be complete. It looks as if she must have become conscious of this, for she suddenly decided to flip no more eggs out of the nest; she refused, in fact, to leave the nest at all after that, until she abandoned it for good and took three chicks with her, leaving two unhatched eggs in the nest. It must have been quite a jolt for those little chicks, the greatest jolt they had ever experienced, when they struck the floor four feet beneath the up-to-date, liftable-roofed, nothing-to-be-added apartment; but when I found them on the floor with their mother, they appeared quite chirk, just as if nothing unexpected had happened.

Two of my grandchildren arrived at Applehurst that very day to spend the summer; they are six and four years of age. It was quite natural that they should make a trip about the farm promptly upon their arrival. An hour after they got here I happened to go to the kitchen, and the young woman who had arrived in the same carriage with the chil-

dren, and who was to have charge of the culinary department, remarked:

"The children have just brought in two fresh eggs; it is beautiful to have nice fresh-laid eggs come in this way, if it is all right for the children to gather them. Had they ought to do it?"

I was interested at once.

"Where did you get those eggs, children," I said to them as they arrived from another trip of exploration.

"Out of a nest in the hen house," was the triumphant reply.

(Grand tableau.)

It was with the greatest reluctance that I explained to the young woman that it is not specially healthful to have eggs that have been unsuccessfully incubated for three weeks brought in as "fresh."

Very cordially yours,

LETTER V

My dear Miss K.:

In a former treatise, my good friend, I mentioned the fact that I did not care to touch poultry while at Applehurst. I regard the hen as a rather irresponsible, fickle creature at best. Anybody who rides in an automobile knows how it is; the hen is always on the wrong side of the road, and as you approach her, if you are going at, say twenty miles or more per hour, she will decide to cross over to the other side and to safety; then when she gets half way across, she suddenly changes her mind and starts back for the wrong side again. To meet that kind of a disposition occasionally, and on the road, only, is not bad; but to have to live with it, and to have to feed it and water it, and surrender to it two or three times a day is another thing. No; I did not want any poultry. But I purchased that Barred Plymouth Rock sitting hen and she just attended to business.

That hen was a nucleus that was likely to grow; that hen was a camel that got its head into my tent; that hen was the precursor of petty annoyances multiplied.

Biddy Number One did so finely, and seemed so eminently sensible and so tractible, that I advertised for another hen "ready to set," and bought her—another dollar. I put her on a nest near Number One; she got off. I waited until dark and put her

on again, and foolishly put some eggs under her; she scorned those eggs and got off at daybreak; it was annoying.

She developed uncanny traits. I visited her three times and each time she was sitting on the partition between her nest and that occupied by Number One and was clucking, rustling her feathers and trying to persuade Number One that she was a ninny to be cultivating the domestic virtues when she might be going about like herself, agitating and possibly bringing about some reform.

I glared at her and she clucked at me; I called her an old suffragist and she clucked again. I lost my temper and said: "You old ninny, if you don't do your duty, I will send you back where you came from," and finally, after the third day, I sold her to my neighbor for just what I paid. There is a sneaking suspicion that the price of sitting hens advanced about twenty-five per cent the three days I owned her—most everything else advanced as much about that time—including grain for horses, seed-buckwheat and everything else that I needed; but I sold her for less than cost—one dollar; nothing for what she ate while on my hands. I sighed not at her going; she was a white Leghorn, pure bred, and I fear might be warranted "not to set."

But the virus had got under my skin, and was likely to break out any moment; and finally it did break out, and when I heard that another neighbor had a hen—a Barred Plymouth Rock ready to sit—I sent a dollar and a boy brought me the new acquisition. I took her out where Number Two had run her brief, riotous course and deposited her. For

three days that creature acted worse than her predecessor. I would carry out some corn and throw it on the floor and she would go for it as though she had not seen food for a week, though food was all about her; I would carry out clear, cold water and fill the dish and she would poke her toothless bill into it and then throw her head into the air and point her bill upward in a perfect ecstasy while the water ran down her long neck into her—well, *probably* into her gizzard, and then she would cluck some more.

On the evening of the third day I started for the little tar-paper-roof-hen-house to see if I could gaze at that hen and not lose my temper and go all to pieces morally. The sun was setting; there was almost a heavenly calm in the atmosphere as I walked past the clothes poles in the back yard, and passed the barn where my horses were peacefully munching their food; the full rich notes of a Wilson's thrush floated across the green field from somewhere in the distance—the first thrush's note I had heard this year; it was almost idyllic—the atmosphere, the blue heavens, the even-song of the new arrival from southland.

I reached the hen-house and looked through the wire netting that takes the place of a board wall. As soon as she saw me all her back feathers stood up straight; she quacked and clucked—"quak, cluck, cluck"—just like that. It was too much for tired nature.

"You idiotic, old hag" I said, "You, you—"

"Quak, cluck, cluck," said Number Three, just like that again.

“You, you! I’d throw this tin pail at your head if you weren’t—”

“Quak, cluck, cluck” she said, and I listened. Then Number Three said to me, said she: “I’ve been thinking it over, and have about decided what to do but I may change my mind. Listen! If you will keep me supplied with corn, and a few apple parings, and fill up the drinking dish twice a day and put some gravel on the floor for the health of my gizzard, I will sit; I may change my mind, but I contemplate three weeks of devotion to a hen’s greatest task.”

I will not take oath that she said this; but if she did not say it what did she say? She has been working for the government for three weeks and I have eight fluffy chicks, full of curiosity and beginning to learn the wishes of their nervous, fussy mother.

Cordially yours,

LETTER VI

Mr. M. H. L.:—

New York City.

My Dear Mr. M.:

You make me glad and sorry. It is always a pleasure to receive a communication from you and the last letter is no exception; but it does not give me pleasure to learn that you are not to visit me in Maine this summer. Your decision involves a great deal; among other things it means that long before the harvest is over in October—before the harvest moon is full—I will be in a state of mind trying to put off a trip to New York until the proper time; if we are not to lunch together on the porch at Applehurst, we must surely enjoy such a function together in the city, as early as I can arrange it. Without your visit the summer is going to be a little longer than I had anticipated; but my self-imposed banishment from my usual walk and haunts will be half over the twenty-eighth of this month. Sometimes the last half of a melon seems smaller than the half which has already been devoured.

I have had much pleasure, and real profit, thus far. If the financial gain divides with successive attacks of rust, blight, bugs and what not, in my fields, until the balance is on the wrong side, there will still be a profit. A man told me recently of one of his neighbors, who said that, when he took a dinner into the field in a pail, he always ate the pie first;

then if he choked to death he would have had the best of the dinner anyway. It is literally true that, if the harvest is never gathered, I will have had the best part of the summer's proposition anyway—the joy of the planting and watching; in the meantime I have my nerves back again.

I went upon the hill today and looked over my fields. The potato rows are long green stripes and make a fair appearance, though there are better looking potato fields near by. I went between two rows of spuds and turnd up the green leaves. A thorough spraying is a necessity at once. It is related that once on a time the poet, Alfred Tennyson, and Mathew Arnold were walking through the lake county in England when they came out on the brow of a hill and looked far across a valley. In one of the pastures was a flock of brown sheep quietly feeding. Matthew Arnold attempted to describe the scene and made several dignified comparisons. None of them seemed to please Tennyson, who finally said:

“No; it looks like nothing but a great blanket full of fleas.”

A potato field, properly cultivated, is a fine and orderly sight; but this morning when I viewed mine and it looked like a great blanket,—in green and brown stripes, I added, “full of bugs and potato bugs at that.”

But there are many compensations for the kind of life I am living. I have triumphed over weeds and other pests in my garden and I am sure that you would commend me, were you here to see it. But only yesterday I was pulling weeds. Please note that I say “pulling weeds,” which is entirely differ-

ent from weeding a garden. "Weeding" is necessary in every garden fertile enough to be worth cultivating; it consists of picking out the little weeds when they are from a fourth of an inch to an inch in height. Weeding is respectable, dignified and orthodox; it needs neither explanation or apology. "Pulling weeds" in a garden is a confession of fickleness, neglect or misfortune. If one is enthused with the gardening spirit in April and plants beyond what he will be willing to keep in good order till harvest time; if one goes fishing for a few days when weeding should be in progress; if one is taken sick just as the weeds are showing themselves, then the garden is threatened with disaster. The weeds outgrow the vegetables until weeding is impossible and "pulling weeds" the only remedy. And one must excuse himself or explain the condition of things, or describe the circumstances which led to the collapse of the garden.

I am beginning to get the first fruits from the garden itself and a few weeks, now, and I will be able to report on the final outcome of this farming proposition. I could not help being interested this morning in the published report of a meeting in Boston, when one of the questions under consideration was: "How can we reduce the surplus potato crop this fall!" And the leading suggestion was that everybody eat potatoes three times a day. So please watch the market and as soon as the great tumble in the price of potatoes comes, due to the enormous crop now predicted, please remember, that if I have to sell potatoes at twenty-five cents per bushel, which have cost me one dollar per bushel to produce,

I am ruined financially; order spuds for breakfast, spuds for lunch, spuds for dinner and if you ever eat between meals, if you love me, make it spuds.

Cordially yours,

LETTER VII

My dear Mr. P.:

We have had several thunder showers at Applehurst recently. Day before yesterday, August first, the shower was unusually heavy; there was a nearness about it—a proximity that was startling.

Two days before we had a heavy shower and Cecil said to me:

“I am already and if the barn is struck it will be my first duty to get the horses out.”

I think it was the first time, in a shower, that the possibility of house or barn being struck was ever mentioned to me. Of course, there is always such a possibility, but in my own family it is never mentioned, however keenly it may be felt.

So Cecil was ready but nothing happened.

July thirty-first an oil painting, to be placed in the library at Good Will had arrived, and wishing to unpack it myself, I had ordered it sent up to me. It had been shipped on a roller, and the roll was standing on end in the northwest corner of the northwest room. For sometime while Cecil and I were eating supper, August first, I had it in mind to say to him:

“If the barn is struck in this shower that’s coming up, do just as you planned to do the other day—get the horses out. If the house is struck remember that the most valuable thing in it is a roll in the corner of the sitting room—save that first,” but I could

see that Cecil was a bit nervous, and I had never in my life discussed the probability of destruction by lightning while a shower was in progress and I decided not to mention it. Two days before Mr. and Mrs. Porter and my three little grandchildren had gone into the Pines to stop a day or two; they were there when the shower came up August first. Shortly before ten o'clock in the evening, Cecil and I were sitting at a table in the south room; it was the table on which I place the food for our meals, and we were both reading—or perhaps I had better say, appearing to read, because I do not think that either one of us was at all absorbed in the literature before us,—for the lightning was vivid and the thunder terrific.

There came an explosion, as though a gun five times as large as an ordinary shot-gun had been discharged in the room.

“What was that?” exclaimed Cecil.

“This house has been struck” I replied.

I stepped to the door that opens from the south room where we were, into the front hall. The hall was full of the dust of plaster, and blue smoke; pieces of plaster were scattered over the floor and the stairway. Seizing my flash light, I went up the stairway to see if the house was afire. The upper hall was full of plaster that had landed there from somewhere, but the ceiling overhead was unbroken. I hastened into the south room, the room directly over the one in which Cecil and I had been sitting; it is a good sized room—twelve feet by twenty with three windows. It is the room used as a kind of

nursery, in which my three little grand-babies "sleep o' nights".

It was a strange scene as I entered. There were the two little beds and the crib, with the mattresses in place, but the sheets and quilts had gone into the "Pines" for use during the stay of Mr. and Mrs. Porter and the children in "Alabama". The south wall near the window had been ripped to pieces; the lathes cleaned of plaster were pointing in every direction, and some of them on the floor. The floor and the small mattresses were strewn with broken glass and plaster; across one of the little beds was a piece of plaster, which I have since measured, two and a half by two feet. Another piece of plaster about the same size had been hurled across the room and into the hallway—a distance of fifteen feet. The window frame on the south was knocked out. It was havoc indeed. I have not felt so much like singing the doxology, and then repeating, in a long time, as I did then and there. There was not a babe in the crib or a child in the room when it happened. Had Mr. and Mrs. Porter not gone to the Pines when they did the three grand-babies would have been in their little beds; in all probability the mother would have been in the room as company for them through the storm, and I do not see how they could have escaped death. Either of the great pieces of plaster even, would have been deadly missiles and the glass and the timbers, and the electric fluid—think of it!

Yesterday morning we inspected the outside of the house—the south end. The attic window has disappeared in full—probably knocked into the

attic. One of the blinds was thrown thirty feet; a blind from the chamber window below it was carried thirty-five feet into the field. The bolt had hit the south end of the ridge, descending, ripping off clapboards, forty-nine courses, until within five feet of my head and then it had left the building; we don't know where it went. That Cecil and I were not killed seems to me remarkable; that we were not stunned seems strange indeed; that the Porters were not in the room or the house at the time is a cause of special happiness on my part. I start in on repairs next week.

Cordially yours,

LETTER VIII

My dear Mr. P.:—

I am still at Applehurst but my enthusiasm is waning; at least I am not as enthusiastic as I was in May. I have tried to think why; have sought an explanation and I think I have it. Physically I believe I am getting what I came after; but this result of my summer's activity bids fair to be my only satisfaction.

As I see it now, all my life it has been my aim—I had never put it in this light before—to do the thing which would remain undone unless I did it. For instance, there was a time when I was going to paint a great picture—a picture as great as Rembrandt Peale's "Court of Death" which had made a profound impression upon my boyish heart, and of course it would be a picture that would never be painted unless I did it. In my early educational day there was great satisfaction in teaching certain young fellows whom, I knew, would not be in school except as I was keeping them there.

In entering the ministry I had a feeling—I have never formulated it before—that there were sermons which would never be preached unless I did it; later on, the controlling motive that took me into the Sunday School missionary field was the feeling that there were communities that would never be organized unless I did the organizing.

My longest continued effort was to be the found-

ing of a philanthropic and educational institution that the world needed, but which would never exist unless I devoted my life to it.

I have never felt like devoting my years to farming. I can state now why it was so; I did not mind the work, for I have worked harder and put in longer days year after year than any farmer I know; I did not under-estimate the importance of agriculture, the very foundation of all other industries and all activities. But,—and I see it now—I was conscious that every foot of land that needed to be tilled would be tilled by others; all the farm products the world needed would be forth-coming without my interest or assistance. Why then should I spend my life doing things that were not called for by conditions?

All this changed when the public was urged to plant, till and garner in order to prevent world wide calamity. If it had become necessary to plough up college campus and public lawns, and golf courses, and backyards, in order to save the world from starvation, then the time had come when I could be interested personally in producing food. So it came about that I ploughed the twelve acres—more or less as deeds are accustomed to state—and devoted much time, in fact all my time, to the project. In my own thoughts it was not a question of market but of real need.

But now that meetings are being held to decide what can be done with the enormous potato crop it looks as though my personal devotion to agriculture was just as necessary this summer, as it was a few years ago when potatoes were only twenty-five cents

a bushel, because they were not needed. I have seen or heard nothing in two weeks that indicates that the fruits of my summer's activity will be wanted; and in that case the cost of the summer's operations can be charged up to the radical change of thought and activity which had become my personal necessity. And it is worth it.

Repairs on the lightning-afflicted house in which I am passing the summer will be completed tonight.

Cecil remains with me and is doing faithful work and taking good care of my horses. I have hired another boy for a few days; this second boarder is in trouble of a peculiar kind and has no place to go and no means of getting there if he had. He has—or thinks he has—a father, a brother and a sister—somewhere in this wide world but he does not know where they are, or what manner of people, save that he was rescued from his father when he was eleven years old. He is now seventeen and will work for me till he has earned enough for a start in life. So I am cooking for two boys instead of one as I had planned.

And since he came I have made a discovery; perhaps I had better say that I am confronted by a fact. Of course I have not had time yet to prove the following proposition, but I am studying it carefully, and have no doubt but that I can prove it in time. Proposition: "If two boys are of the same age and of equal size and appetite, then the amount of food consumed by the two at any given meal will be equal to twice the amount consumed by either one of them at the same meal." If I do not succeed

in proving this I shall appeal to you for assistance, for I feel sure it can be done.

Yesterday I had my potatoes sprayed again with a most villainous mixture of blue vitrol, arsenate of lead and lime. It was the third time I have had it done. Today it did not seem as though the potatoes could survive the day, the way the bugs are eating them, but I had hopes of this spraying—the other poisonous visitations upon them do not seem to have made much impression. I went out this morning expecting to find the field strewn with the lifeless forms of the enemy, but lievlier bugs never tackled a six acre potato field. I had an interview with those bugs. They said that they were more than pleased with the way I had treated them this summer. They said that all they had asked or expected was that they might have the potato vines for their own use; it never occurred to them that I would furnish all sorts of condiments and sweets to go with their usual food. They said that these things I had been putting on their food were great appetizers; they were just like sugar and cider-vinegar on my lettuce, or salad dressing on cubes of cold potatoes served on my own table. I began to feel apprehensive. It looks as though I have precipitated a period of unwonted dissipation among these repulsive things. All day long, as I have visited the place, I have found an endless round of pink teas, picnic dinners, wedding breakfasts, and similar forms of enjoyment in progress. About noon I discovered two bugs that seemed to be dizzy; they were pale and bloated, but I learned upon investigation that they were cases of gluttony brought

about by the highly seasoned food; they were not cases of poison as I at first thought. I feel at this writing as though I would like to lay an endless train of dynamite until it extended between each and every pair of rows of potatoes, touch it off and blow the whole dissipated aggregation to smithereens.

Cordially yours,

LETTER IX

My dear Miss G.:—

Because of your interest in bird life I fancy that you may be interested to know that, although I am a farmer, I have not lost my interest in our feathered friends because of familiarity with them.

No one has better opportunity than the farmer, to become acquainted with the birds of his locality as well as other birds in their annual migration. When I came here April twenty-eighth, the juncos had arrived trusting and confidential. They visited the wood-pile, the pine tree near the front door; they flitted around the barn and almost persuaded me that they had serious intentions of stopping here all summer; but I think they were bound further north, anyway they vanished in a few days. Some birds which I did not at first recognize, but later identified as the Blackburnian warbler paid me a brief visit; they are due in the time of the apple blossoms, but apple blossoms were very late this year, and the Blackburnian could not wait. A pair of chestnut-sided warblers nested half a mile away on another farm. Others of the warblers spent the summer at "Applehurst" and nested, probably, in the border of the woods. Two or three horned larks called the second day that I was here, but they said or seemed to say:

"It's a long way to Labrador, but our hearts are right there."

I did not see them again.

There is no place on "Applehurst" suitable for an American crow to build a nest though they "flew over my head" often and reared their young in the tall pines on neighboring farms; and their first cousins, the blue jays, were very noisy, until the first of June, with their unwelcome, metallic penny-trumpet calls.

I thought, early in the season, that a pair of night hawks was going to rear its little family of two on some flat ledge; but they probably decided in favor of a flat roof in Waterville or Skowhegan. A phoebe, or I should say, a pair of them, proved their presence to me daily, by their lively, eager calls; I fancied at first that they were going to build under my front porch, or the piazza on the north side of the house, but diligent search revealed no nest, and I think they made their home under some shelter among my nearest neighbor's buildings.

I do not think that it is usual for robins to nest in pine trees; they show a more varied choice, and more unaccountable selections of sites for their nests than any other bird with which I am familiar; but a pair built very early in the season, in the very thick branches of one of the pine trees near the house, and seemed to take the contract to keep my garden, on which the pine tree bordered, free from angle worms and grubs.

A great northern shrike crossed the premises once early in the season, and was probably the one that later nested on Good Will Farm, and was reported to me as working havoc among the nestlings of other birds. Among the friends that paid me brief

visits, deciding not to summer on my premises were half a dozen cedar birds; they visited the big Balm of Gilead tree, remaining a few moments, but appeared very nervous and fidgety.

"We can't stop but a few moments," they said, "we've so many calls to make, and it's late anyway." But I was glad to welcome them even for a moment.

The blue birds reared a family in a box in the orchard; another pair wanted to occupy the little house in the Balm of Gilead but a pair of English sparrows nesting on a neighboring farm, came over and said they should not stop there; in like manner did these pestiferous creatures treat the pair of wood-swallows that occupied the house last year.

A pair of cat birds furnished a full orchestra, morning and afternoon; song thrushes gave evening concerts, while in the middle of the day, the bobolinks appeared in full dress and went into ecstasies of song.

Among all the bird houses put up at Good Will and vicinity last spring there was not one adapted to the use of the flicker, or golden winged woodpecker; this was an oversight on my part. Where the flicker that greeted me occasionally during the summer found a nesting place I cannot tell, but somewhere in the vicinity he carried out his summer program.

The whip-poor-will did not once come near the house, but whip-poor-willed to his heart's content in the edge of a deep wood, south of the bean field. The Baltimore orioles wove their pendant houses at Good Will, I suppose, because there are no elm trees at "Applehurst" large enough to suit them; for

some reason the meadow larks, in which I especially delight, preferred the low lands at Good Will, and Willow-Wood, to anything I could offer them; the purple martins at Willow-Wood told me one day that a part of them would colonize up here, if I could furnish suitable accommodations—they said something, and if they did not say that, what did they say? and I may respond to the proposal next spring.

No farm is complete, no country life is perfect, without a few barn swallows to circle about at sunset, and the well ventilated barn, afforded ample accommodations for them.

Just how insectivorous birds survived the months of May and June, I cannot tell; there were no insects, on account of the prolonged cold wet spell, until about the twentieth of June. How the ground sparrows and other birds who nest close to mother earth, managed to keep their eggs warm and dry through the long continued rain of the week ending June sixteenth, remains a mystery: but in the midst of it all, four ground sparrows were hatched in the edge of the orchard and safely brought through the perils of early infancy. Repeated visits to the nest showed that Mrs. Sparrow's maternal instincts were equal to any climatic emergency. But what a sad, sad book could be written upon the tragedies of bird life on any farm, in any woodland, in any summer!

About the middle of May I had piled some brush to be burned and the burning must be done before the field could be ploughed. Not until the burning was well under way, did I discover a song sparrow's nest with the eggs in it. This was dire misfortune

for the sparrow, and I regretted it; but to my surprise the sparrows—one of them—sat on a telephone wire close by and poured forth a little torrent of song, all the while the home nest was in the conflagration. Nero fiddled when Rome was burning; I understand that, but I fail to understand yet the attitude of this feathered songster toward the destruction of its nest and eggs.

Tragedy number two occurred when the same field was being ploughed; I was holding the plough and the “hired man” was driving; not having much knowledge of the ways of wild things, he suddenly exclaimed:

“There’s a bird that’s hurt; do you want me to get it?”

I assured him that the bird was not injured but was trying to attract our attention to her and away from the nest. He could not believe me at first, but satisfied himself that the creature had no intention of being caught in the little game that she was playing. It took about fifteen minutes to go around the field with the plough and when we came back to the place, the dear creature had to leave her nest again, and so it went, each round bringing the plough a foot nearer to her nest and its treasures, and the plough turning a great furrow each time—nearer and nearer; at the rate of four feet an hour came this kind of car of Juggernaut until, finally, it lifted the turf in which the nest was located, turned it over and buried it forever from the grieved mother.

It used to be a sign when I was a boy, and it may be now, that if hens run to shelter when it rains, the down-pour will soon be over; if they continue to

forage for food in the wet, the storm is to be long continued. I had not noticed until the beginning of a full week of rain in June, that possibly the birds may be watched as a sign in the same way.

Each day during that long period of rain, they sang persistently and sometimes it seemed as if the harder it rained the louder and more persistently they poured forth their song.

Sunday morning, June seventeenth, I awoke at three-twenty by my watch. This was standard time, and means that by local time—sun time—it was two-forty-five A.M. It was raining hard; robins, cat-birds, sparrows and one bobolink were taxing their throats to the uttermost in a wonderful concert. It continued for at least half an hour, when I fell asleep. At seven, the rain still pouring, the birds were running the same trills, filling the place with harmony, above the sound of the falling rain—a sound that, because it had been almost continuous for a week, was beginning to be monotonous and oppressive.

Cordially yours,

LETTER X

To Mr. M. H. L.—

Dear Friend:

I promised to write at the end of the season and tell you just how I succeeded or failed in my farming. But before I descend to details and talk about the number of bushels and pecks and pounds of produce coaxed from field and garden, I must tell you about the “Harvest Home Night” or whatever it may be called.

I had an agricultural fair; had it here in the south room at Applehurst; held it in the evening only and admission was free. I could exhibit without charging any admission because no premiums were offered, I being the sole exhibitor and competition impossible, and I did not even have to pay hall rent. The exhibit cost me a lot—there’s no mistake about that because into the cost I must figure commercial fertilizer, cultivation, time, seeds and many other things; but the direct cost was *nil*.

Advertising cost me nothing because I did not decide to open the exhibit to the public until I had got every thing together so I could see how it would look; and, by the time I had done that—about noon of the day of this special occasion—it was too late to get out any flaming posters, even if I had recognized the need or felt the desire. So instead of printers’ ink I just sent around word that I would have agriculture products on exhibition in this

house from seven to eight-thirty that very evening, and would like to have folks come, examine, criticize, congratulate and also write their names in the Applehurst guest book.

I had secured some paper plates made by the Keyes Fibre Company of Fairfield, which makes practically all the paper plates that are used; a supply of coffee and postum, sugar and cream, and had borrowed mugs so I could serve coffee to the grown-ups and postum to the growing.

It took Douglass McHugh, a Good Will boy, and me all of three hours to move things out of the south room and arrange the exhibits at convenient places.

There were four exhibition spots in the room; and each had a suggestion of creature comforts—a kind of harvest-home atmosphere that pleased me. At ten minutes of seven the kerosene lamps were lighted; at seven o'clock the visitors arrived. No one had been told of the hot drink that was to be served—a mug of it to each visitor.—so the exhibit was the only thing.

Pryor's band, Sousa's band, an orchestra whose name I have forgotten, John McCormack, the famous tenor, the Trinity church choir and a celebrated banjoist—name has escaped me—were all assembled in the dining room, ready to respond when their turn came on the program, or rather, perhaps I should explain that Mr. W. P. Hinckley, Supervisor of Good Will, had a Victrola and a supply of records stationed in the middle of the dining room—there would not have been room for all these musicians had they been present in person.

The junior class of the Good Will High School managed the arrivals and told them what to do and saw that they did it, viz: turn to the left, enter the sitting room and place signature in the guest book, then cross the hallway into the south room and examine the products. The preface to the "Applehurst Guest Book" reads thus:

"All persons visiting this house, whether for a few minutes or many days, are requested to write their names in this book, especially if they be such as are fond of all out doors, and mountains—at a distance—and love birds and flowers and woods and trails and things to eat and other benefits which God bestows upon us."

The first exhibition spot in the south room was a large table with sixteen plates on it. Half of the plates were devoted to eight varieties of apples—apples that ranged from garnet to pale gold—gay Ben Davis, golden Tolman Sweets, rich R. I. Greenings, subdued Baldwins, attractive Northern Spys—apples that appeared appetizing and that loaded the air with the bewitching odor that always prevails at pomological shows in New England—apples that looked better than they smelled even—not "apples of gold in pictures of silver" but apples of Applehurst on plates of paper.

On the same table were four plates of beans—wax-beans, string beans, Rowe's prolific beans and yellow-eyed beans—the last variety being from the very best strain of "Yellow-eyes" in existence, the seed having been procured from the Maine State College last spring. The other four plates were devoted to corn on the ear—one plate of Yellow Flint,

one of Golden Bantam, one of Stowell's Evergreen, and the fourth containing one ear of corn, fairly good to look at but exhibited to teach any youthful and unsophisticated spectator present the kind of ear not to select for seed.

The next exhibition spot had eight plates—samples of beets, turnips, three varieties of potatoes, and cabbage. One variety of potato was from seed sent from Montana last spring by Mr. E. C. McDonald. I did my best to make them compare favorably with the other varieties but the label, after announcing the above facts contained the additional word "Punk."

The third exhibition spot was different. One card on the table said:

"IT IS NOT ALL OF FARMING TO RAISE 'CROPS'; THERE SHOULD BE BEAUTY SPOTS ON EVERY FARM."

And so here were plates of canna bulbs, dahlia bulbs, gladioli bulbs, and the seed burs of the Virginia Creeper; and on this table were a pound of butter and a jar of milk.

The fourth exhibition spot was a return to crops and crop products. A squash and a pumpkin; big seed cucumbers; a plate of buck-wheat and a plate of buckwheat flour; a plate of

"FRESH HENERY EGGS QUOTED TODAY IN BOSTON AT NINETY-TWO CENTS PER DOZEN, OR NEARLY EIGHT CENTS EACH" the label said; a plate each of wheat, shorts, middlings, and flour; yes, there were some other things but I have mentioned most of them.

And the visitors came and the bands played in the dining room,—sometimes Prior's and sometimes Sousa's—and the fire flared and flickered on the

hearth, and guests wrote their names in the guest book, and the odor of coffee floated in from the kitchen and mingled with odor of Gravensteins and Tolman Sweets, and the people talked and laughed and commented on the exhibit, and I personally escorted parties from one exhibition spot to another, and metaphorically speaking, "sang the praises" of one exhibit, explained others and apologized for anything that seemed to call for apologies.

Eight-forty by the clock arrived, one hundred and forty-five guests had written in the "Guest Book," nearly everybody had gone, and the guests had come in such a bunch and kept me so busy that no hot drink had been served because in the general happiness of explaining the exhibits I had failed to send word to the kitchen to serve coffee. By the way, I have a lot of coffee, etc., left over, and if you will come up you may fill up; I have returned the borrowed mugs but I could get one for you somewhere; I don't drink it myself though I know that many people pronounce it good.

One thing I have failed to mention; thus far I have made no reference to my plan of welcoming the coming guests and speeding the departing, and this device was really the first and the last of my exhibit; it welcomed my friends before I could greet them; it expressed a final farewell sometime after I had said "Good Night" to one after another of those who had accepted my invitation. It promised in its early inception to be a grotesque success; in the end, from my standpoint, it came near being a gruesome failure because no one can afford to deride

his guests, as they depart, no matter how mechanical and impersonal the derision may seem to be.

Late in the afternoon I sacrificed my biggest and best pumpkin, and, for the first time in over fifty years I made a Jack-o'-lantern. I have often wondered why people who make these things give them such commonplace features. I have never seen real art in the face of a Jack-o'-lantern until I had completed one as the crowning feature of my exhibit here at Applehurst. The two perpendicular wrinkles which I deftly cut between the eyebrows gave Jack a conscientious expression seldom seen on real human faces and exceedingly difficult to develop in a pumpkin. The curve of the mouth added character, and the lines around the corners gave a benevolent expression which most makers of Jack-o'-lanterns have failed to get and probably never tried to produce.

In order to satisfy myself that I had achieved the *ne plus ultra* in Jack-o'-lanterns I took it in to a dark room early in the afternoon and placed a lighted taper inside. I was more than pleased; the effect left nothing to be desired; I had achieved a combination of the grotesqueness of an ordinary Jack-o'-lantern and the benevolence of Santa Claus on

—“the night before Christmas
When all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring”

I submit that this had never, so far as I know, been done in the past.

When I lighted the lamps in the house I placed a lighted taper in Jack and put him on the front

porch. He smiled; he looked so cheerful, so benign, so philanthropic, and seemed to be so glowing with benevolence that I had just an instant of compunction about leaving him out on the porch for the night was dark and there was a chill in the air. But it was some satisfaction to know that, in case I failed to meet each guest individually, Jack would make each and everyone welcome and happy. I might have stationed some man or woman there to speak words of welcome but I could never know whether or not such person was saying just what I wanted said, but Jack would say it all, and he would say, out of that benign expression precisely the same thing to each and every one; he would express the warmth and the glow of friendship.

With such confidence in the efficiency of my device, and Jack's ability to do the honors of the occasion in a dignified way, I forgot all about him until most of my guests had departed. Then I happened to go out on the porch having accompanied a friend to his carriage. I stood face to face with Jack. In a mild way I was horrified; horripilation attacked me and there was a reason for it.

Horripilation is a good word; it is made up of "*horror*," the meaning of which you understand, and "*pilus*" which means hair. Horripilation is the result of fright or shock that makes you feel as if your hair were standing on end; it is horror in your scalp, a creepy sensation all over you. This is what gave me horripilation, viz: There was no benign expression on Jack's face at all—no such welcoming smile as I had imagined. He looked like a vagabond—like a rum-blushed, whiskey-tinted, brandy-

blasted vagabond, smiling a sardonic smile, grinning a grumpy grimace at each of my friends after I had received their congratulations and they were starting for home. I stood there for two or three minutes and watched. As a dignified old man stepped down the path it seemed as though Jack had called out:

“Good Night old pard; did you forget anything?”

And Jack smiled that exasperating, insulting smile, the insolence of which all my guests must have felt.

When a young lady congratulating me, said “Good Night” and tripped away, Jack seemed to call out:

“High, there! Old woman, would you have liked a cup of coffee, *Coffee*, *CoffEE*?” and there was that grin,—the grin which I myself had carved and set to make the last happy impression on my neighbors—a grin little short of fiendish.

I’ll tell you, my friend, if ever I have another evening agricultural exhibit at Applehurst, I shall say the “Good Night” myself; I will not have any illuminated pumpkin grinning insults to those I respect and love as they leave this hospitable old house.

I was going to tell you just how I came out with the season’s operations on the farm, but I have neither space nor time left.

Cordially yours,

LETTER XI

To Mr. M. H. L.—

Dear Friend:

In my last letter I intended to report on my farming operations in this year 1919, but I devoted so much time to my “Harvest Home Night” or “Agricultural Fair” or whichever it shall be called that I failed to give you any idea of the value of the products. But I have leisure now and you shall have a full and concise account of the produce, both as to quantity and monetary value, and then you may judge for yourself whether I can afford to continue this arrangement any longer.

First, there is the grain. My chief grain crop was wheat of which I had sixty-eight bushels. The fixed price of wheat is \$2.26 per bushel, which makes mine represent \$153.68; but I preferred to have mine converted into flour and feed. I have sent half of the wheat to the mill and have received it back in the form of flour, bran and middlings. There were six barrels of flour which I have sold at \$11.00 a barrel a total of \$66.00. This means that my flour, when I send the rest of the wheat to the mill, will amount to another six barrels, or twelve barrels in all, sold at \$132.00. The bran and middlings make up the difference between the value of the whole wheat at \$2.26 per bushel and the milled product.

Next in order comes my potato field. I had one hundred and—

I was interrupted here, my friend, by a knock at the door. I answered the knock and met a boy, who I should think is about thirteen years old.

“Come in and sit down” I said.

He came in and sat.

I know this boy well, but I had never seen him to such good advantage as just here and now. He sat on the old sofa directly in front of the fireplace. The sun was already low in the west and the light in the room was dim. I had just aroused the flames by adding some fresh birch to the load the andirons were carrying, and the yellow light surrounded him with a golden atmosphere.

After a few words of greeting and remarks about the weather, the boy suddenly lapsed into silence. He gazed steadfastly at the yellow flames; his face reflected the golden light and he seemed to be half glorified. I wondered how the growing silence would be broken—the silence which, if continued much longer, would become oppressive; I waited until the lad himself, evidently struggling to break from the spell of the open fire said:

“Caught many fish lately?”

This unexpected reference to the sport of which youth has ever dreamed and of which old age has never tired, brought me back from a hazy contemplation of the picture before me—the russet brown of the upholstery of the sofa’s high back, a rich setting indeed for the lad’s illumined form, his finely chiseled features,—features that somehow had reminded me just then of faces I had seen of angels cut in marble—brought me back, I say, to the tangible

things of life and I realized that I was a host, a guest was present and I must speak.

"Not many" I replied, because I must say something and to say "No" would be too short and perhaps indicate to my unbidden but very welcome guest that I was in ill-humor and not wishing to talk with him.

There was a long pause, while he continued to gaze at the fire. How delightful it was after all, I thought that, even though I had come up here to write, this boy felt that he was at liberty to come up here and talk—just talk as friend with friend. After a time the silence was broken again and again it was the lad who led:

"Any big ones?"

"Not—well, not so very large" I replied. "You know, perhaps, that I haven't been fishing much lately. I've been busy; yes, I've been very busy, and every day has been full; each day has brought its du—"

"Any trout?" queried my visitor.

"No, not any trout—oh, yes, I did: yes: I've been trout fishing since I saw you and I caught a few. Two friends of mine came from Massachusetts and asked me to—

"Any pickerel?" persisted the lad.

The pauses had been long; neither of us seemed to care whether or not the conversation lagged, and yet each of us seemed to feel that remarks at intervals were essential to the occasion. The yellow light had faded, the gloom of dusk had gathered in the corners of the room, the coals were now sending forth a red glow that made the lad's features stand out like a

clean cut cameo—a pink profile against a gray gloom. Suddenly he turned to me and spoke again:

“Do you know that I love you?” he asked. “Anyway I do.”

“Well, that’s strange” I replied, as though I were specially amused by his declaration, “that’s strange. I’m not handsome, I’m not rich; I’m not specially interesting, I’m not—well, why do you love me?”

“Well” said the lad, turning his head to one side like one in deep contemplation of some very obstruse problems and speaking slowly, “Well, there is more reason than one. In the first place you have told so many boys what they ought to do and what they ought not to do.”

“What?”

“Yes, sir; you’ve told so many boys what they ought to do and what they ought not to do.”

Oh, my friend, were you ever visited by an angel—a real angel? Did you ever go into a vacant house and light a fire in the chimney place, and begin to write a letter to some far away friend, and have an angel knock at the door and come in at your bidding and sit down near you in front of the blazing wood? Did you watch the angel’s face as it glowed in changing light, and did he—the angel—tell you that he loved you because you had told people—specially young people—what they ought to do and what they ought not to do? Then you know what was in my heart, as I reached out and grasped the lad’s warm hand in mine, and looked through the mist suddenly gathered in my eyes, straight into his eyes, but I could not speak. I told you that a boy knocked at my door and came in and sat down near me; this

same boy lives at Good Will—a real boy—and I believe his pet name is “Shanghai” or something like that; but I declare unto you now that I’ve been visited by an angel, right here by my fireside. He came while I was writing to you about wheat, potatoes and dollars and cents.

Hanged be wheat-raising, and hanged be potatoes and cabbages, shorthorn carrots, yellow-eyed beans, and turnips; and hanged be dollars and cents! I’ve had a visitor and now I have a vision; nothing short of an angel would say to a man what that boy said to me. They may call him a school boy, they may call him by the name his mother gave him, or they may call him Shanghai; but he has wisdom beyond his years, beyond mortals, beyond this world, and it came from above.

Men do not love people who tell them what to do and what not to do. Jeremiah told the people what to do and what not to do. See what happened.

Ezekiel the prophet did it and see what came of it.

Jesus of Nazareth did it and they crucified him.

Paul did it and they beheaded him.

If I ever tell you how I came out with my farming it will be in another letter. The lad has departed; the fire has gone out—the angel has left his message; I must close.

Cordially yours,

LETTER XII

My dear Mr. M.:—

It is now nearly a year since I wrote you the first letter from Applehurst; you will recall that it was late in April, when I decided to join the great army that had been called to fight against a food shortage. Those were great days back there, a year ago, nearly, when I began to devote all my time to the farm—that is, to farming and cooking for myself and my hired man. I like to think of those days, and I like to talk about those days—about the horses and the hens, the fields, the potato planting, the bean planting, the orcharding and all that; I like to talk so long as no one asks me about the financial outcome. To be frank with you, the finances of the adventure are a sore spot with me. In June, the flood came, and although Applehurst is on a hill, about three acres of my potatoes were under water for a full week; a similar fate overtook about two acres of my beans. The fertilizer had cost money, and the seed beans had cost money—the beans were twelve dollars per bushel, and I planted four bushels of them—and the expense of labor, the cultivating, the spraying and the harvesting all cost money. These things furnished a big hole into which to drop money, and when the money was once dropped in, it seemed to disappear; I never saw it again, the hole was so deep.

The difference between what I spent and what I

received, would have sent me across the continent for a six weeks' vacation, and back; in times of peace it would have taken me across the Atlantic twice, and afforded me a month on the continent. But on such a trip I would have been a consumer—not a producer; the Government had said: "produce" and so I went at it. And I provided more vegetables than my family consumed; so I was on the producer's side.

You ask about my potatoes? Now what is the use of asking such questions; I am not obliged to answer, and I feel non-communicative.

You ask about my beans? What makes you so inquisitive? I am not asking how much you made or lost in your business between April and November, and I am as non-communicative about beans, as I am about potatoes.

My orchard was a joy to me. From the time I gave it the dormant spray, through the blossom time, through the gradual maturing of the fruit, and through the coloring period when some of the trees became almost as red with fruit as they had been pink with blossoms last spring, until the apples were in the cellar, the trees were of interest.

Some of the trees were threatened late in the season with *boy-too-the-tis* (accent on second syllable) but the trouble did not become acute. I wonder if you noticed any inroad of it when you had an orchard. I can see how in some localities it might be difficult to handle. *Boytoothetis* is particularly aggravating because it does not show itself until the fruit is almost ripe, but not ripe enough for use. I find that orchard books do not say anything about

boytoothetis, but its presence in an orchard is easily detected. You find near the trees—usually the trees that have the most attractive fruit on them—apples lying on the ground which look at the first glance, as though a man had bitten into them, and finding them hard or too sour, had tossed them aside looking for better fruit; but if the wound is carefully examined, it shows that it was made with smaller teeth than a man's.

I have been told that *boytoothetis* seldom attacks an orchard if the owner keeps a bull-dog, and I have heard that a shot-gun loaded with beans and fired into the middle of the orchard at intervals, is a preventive; but I did not try any of those things. I had plenty of apples.

And now it is almost time to begin again; in fact I have already begun. I have a better equipment for farming than I had a year ago; I have a good supply of seed—beans, potatoes, corn, oats, wheat, barley; I have a good supply of fertilizer—that is, it was ordered three months ago, and has not come; in place of the two forlorn biddies that were purchased on the spur of the moment and together hatched out eleven chicks, everyone of which reached maturity—instead of two forlorn biddies, I have two flocks of hens—a dozen in each flock; twelve full-blooded Rhode Island Reds, and the same number of Plymouth Rocks.

It's interesting, intensely interesting, and in my judgment, it is a gamble.

But I am not going to surrender; here goes for another season of planting, hoeing, spraying, cultivating, haying. I win or I lose. If I win, success

will feed my ambition to make this hill-top an interesting place in years to come; if I lose, well, if I lose I shall throw up both hands on the first day of December, and join the great army of consumers again. You are not likely to hear from now, until after planting.

Yours as ever,

LETTER XIII

My dear Mr. L.:—

I did not intend to write you at this time, but I must tell you a melancholy episode entirely different from anything within the realm of my experience until this afternoon.

I have said “melancholy” but this may not be the adjective which best describes the event which I am about to relate, if I had a better command of our language. I think some of my acquaintances would say it was an “awful” experience, and yet it did not fill me with “awe,” as a thunder storm or an earthquake would—not exactly. I have thought of the word “terrible” and yet that adjective, like the one which immediately preceeds it, seems to me to have been overworked, and I hesitate to make use of it. You will know of some word, I doubt not that will exactly meet the requirements.

To make a short story long, I am in this house all alone today; the family of my immediate kin—my daughter, her children, and their father—have just gone to New York, and someone moves in here next week; the floor of the kitchen is being painted today. I came up here to write, but as I have said, not to you, for I owe a friend a letter, and was determined to mail him a missive tomorrow morning.

It has been raining steadily, as you know, for the last three days, and the first thing, as I came into the northwest room so gray and silent and damp,

was to light a fire on the hearth. I spent a little time watching the tiny flames and the curling smoke, as the blaze made its way among the birch sticks, and then I began to write. I had not expressed a single idea on paper when I thought, at first, my eyes were blurred; but I soon satisfied myself that I got this impression from a half-grown mouse—a *Mus domestica*—which, as soon as I moved disappeared into a small hole in the floor close to the hearthstone.

I proceeded to write, endeavoring to adequately express my first thought, when, behold, another mouse came out of the same hole, and moved noiselessly toward the fire. One might suspect that it was the same mouse, but I knew it was not, because this second one had a small white spot a little higher than the eyes, between the ears—a spot shaped like an inverted “V” filled in solid.

Later I learned that there were six of these half-grown creatures—*Mus*—in the house, and using this particular hole.

My first thoughts were of lenity; I sat and studied this tiny creature with interest, and tried to recall whether I had ever read of mice with an inverted “V” shaped white spot on the forehead; what if I had discovered a new specie! I then remembered that the family which had just moved out of this house had been annoyed more or less by these quiet creatures, and while they could not possibly annoy me, I would, out of consideration for others, see if I could reduce their number.

I say they “cannot annoy me,” and this may surprise you, but you must remember that I am a lover

of wild life, and while these little rodents are not exactly domesticated—they do not answer when their name is called—they may be regarded as wild, and are therefore included in the category of “wild and interesting,” although living in the house.

I moved. One of the mice had left the hole and was creeping along near the mop-board, when, with a dexterous movement with the remains of a croquet-mallet handle, I crushed the little creature. I could not help feeling that it was un unequal conflict as to size; I weigh two-hundred and twelve pounds, while for a guess, this half-grown mouse weighed three-fourths of an ounce. It was *avoirdupois versus* agility, and *avoirdupois* won. I threw him into the fireplace and he was cremated at once.

I will not take time to tell you the details of the next two captures, but in less than half an hour, three of these cute little visitors had been cremated—one of them just plain mouse-color and the other two with the inverted “V” shaped, white spot.

Finally a mouse came out of the hole and moved slowly about the hearth, then struck across the floor toward the waste-basket, under the table near my feet. I said to myself:

“Isn’t it queer? If I were a woman I’d be half crazed; I’d probably scream and jump into a chair, and frighten the little tooley-wooley back into the hole, and there is no telling what would happen next. It’s queer how women always think a mouse wants to get into their clothing. Here I am—a man, and have no more fear of a mouse, and no more suspicions of any evil intentions, than I have of a chip of birch wood—not a bit.”

And I went on with my writing. I had got to where, in my letter, I was asking my friend if he could tell me how to make one hundred bushels of potatoes at one dollar a bushel pay for one-hundred and thirty-five dollars worth of commercial fertilizer when I felt the funniest little tickle, down below my knee, that I ever felt in my life. It was just as though somebody were trying to annoy me with a feather picked off the head of a ruby-throated humming bird, or, as I try to analyze my sensations now, it was as though a tiny tadpole were trailing his tail over me—a cool, tantalizing, shivery tickle, most uncanny and weird in its effect.

I really cannot describe that tickle—it was so different from anything else in this world.

And then, quicker than I can write it, yes, quicker than I could tell it if you were here, that toooley-woolley tickling thing moved up—right up to my knee, and it was inside my underclothing. I didn't jump into a chair and scream—not by any means; I am not a woman, and only a woman or a girl would do that. But I confess that I—well what would you do, if you knew that a pearl-gray mouse, with an inverted "V" shaped white spot on its forehead—in all probability a new specie—was traveling between you and your underwear, and was already above your knee? What would you *do*?

Well, I'll tell you what I did. I conducted myself like a man—a man in love with nature and especially wild things—a man bent on learning whether or not a new specie of *Mus domestica* had appeared on his premises. I jumped up, so as to

make what I said more emphatic—more commanding, as it were—and I shouted:

“Go back, you pesky critter; go back!”

If I had been a profane man, I think I would have used swear words, but I never do that; yet I had got to say something, and so I spoke again—this time louder:

“Dunder und blitzen; Hic fabula docet; Koosh! Go back.”

But I was not at all sure he would understand. I had spoken imperatively in four languages. “Dunder und blitzen” I guess is Dutch for thunder and lightening; “hic fabula docet,” means “this fable teaches;” but it is all I remember now of Latin, and I thought it would get by, specially if the *Mus domestica* proved to be of Italian origin; and Koosh is the French name of a Belgian dog up at Willow-Wood, and her name is all I know of French.

But I did not trust to commands, even in four languages. While I was letting out the most appropriate expressions at my command I clapped my right hand over the spot where Mus was—he had got just above the knee, and then, with my left thumb and fore finger, I clamped the pesky fellow’s head. And I held on to him, too. It made me shiver, and it seemed just as though there was a mouse crawling up each leg, between the underwear and my flesh, and another crawling up my back, and each with a “V” shaped white spot in his forehead.

Ralph Cain was painting the kitchen floor. He came into the room, and I told him about it.

“Is that so?” said Ralph, “Where is the mouse now?”

“Where is the mouse *now*?” I repeated. “Here he is, up my pantaloons’ leg, between me and my under-clothing. I’ve—*Hic*—had hold—*fabula*—of him for the last—*docet*—five minutes; I don’t dare let go of him; I’m afraid he isn’t dead yet—Koosh!

I held on to *Mus domestica* a few minutes longer, pinching his head harder and harder between my thumb and finger while Ralph Cain stood with a paint brush in his hand and a smile on his face, and watched me. I could not see what there was to smile at but Ralph is easily amused; he probably thought it was funny but some people have mighty queer notions of fun. At length I let up on little *Mus*: I parted my thumb and finger and the fur-covered little corpse fell to the floor. I took melancholy satisfaction a moment later in tossing it into the fireplace.

I stopped writing the other letter just to tell you about this event, it is so unlike my life’s experiences. I am sorry now I acted so hastily. Had I been more deliberate, I might have understood better just what happened. I do not know whether it was the nose of *mus domestica*, or his precious little feet, or the tip of his tail, which gave me that sensation, and I shall never know, because I am not going to try the experiment over again; no, I could not be persuaded to do it. I don’t care, anyway. Seems as I write, just as if I ought to have my feet up in a chair, because the remnant of the brood of sneaking, brazen, squeaking, peaked-nose, creepy-footed, tickling-tailed vermin would run up me again. But I did

not scream—no, I am too manly to get excited over a harmless little mouse. I confess that I am a bit apprehensive lest, when the family moves in, some nervous woman will see one of these little “darlints” and get excited and possibly shriek.

Having relieved my pent-up feelings by relating this episode, melancholy or whatever you see fit to call it, I shall now complete the letter I came here to write. But in it I shall say nothing about the mice up here at Applehurst; you alone have been made familiar with the creepy details of today’s experiences.

Cordially yours,

P. S. I have been thinking, since I wrote the above, and have about concluded that, unless I can eradicate this family of *mus*, I shall sell Applehurst and begin all over again on some other farm. I am sitting down as I write this but both my feet are up in a chair. It is a cramped and rather uncomfortable position but I am convinced it is the best way to sit in this room—till I get a cat or something, or sell and move away.

LETTER XIV

My Dear Friend L—:

It is a long time since you have heard from me; and I am writing you in a kind of patriarchal spirit. I do not imagine that it ever occurred to you that I am any thing like the Old Testament patriarchs, say Abraham, Jesse and Job; and yet, in one respect I find myself similar to them. One never cuts quite clear of the conceptions of his boyhood, and away back somewhere in those early days, I got a mental picture of the Old Testament characters. I have always thought of Abraham, as being tall, slender, and wearing a long beard, although there must have been a time in his life when he was beardless. On the other hand, I have never been able to think of Job, as anything else than short, sallow, clean-shaven and fat. And I admit that, physically, I cannot bear much resemblance to either one of them; I am neither tall, slender, and bearded, nor am I short, fat and sallow. My resemblance to the men in the far past is summed up in one word, and the word is "sheep."

Abraham owned much cattle and many sheep; I do not know just how many Jesse had, but his son David tended them, and there were enough of them to occupy his time; but the ancient records say that Job had seven thousand of these wool-laden quadrupeds.

It seems an enormous flock compared with my

own, but I am informing you that I am the happy possessor of a flock of eleven sheep; which means that I am six thousand, nine hundred and eighty-nine sheep short of Job's possession in the time of his greatest prosperity. But now that I am really in the sheep business, I take some satisfaction in the fact that sheep raising is such an ancient and honorable calling.

Just stop and think what it means when you are fussing over one little lamb, to know that David, the Psalmist of Israel, devoted his hours and days to the same occupation.

My first real experience in sheep-raising,—not in sheep owning but in sheep-raising—came on the sixth day of last February. Unless you have vivid recollections of that date—February sixth—do not try to recall it. On account of atmospherical conditions, it is better that it be forgotten as soon as possible.

It was on that date that the thermometer here in Somerset County, Maine, was down, down, 'way down; the wind was blowing out of the northwest, and the air was full of dry, sand-like snow. It was too cold for a night at Applehurst, and I was determined to make my way from my office to my own home, Willow-Wood. I would not have ridden that distance for ten dollars; it was too cold to ride, and so I insisted upon walking, and I have put it down as the most strenuous thing that I ever did—that walk of less than two miles into that northwest breeze.

I had been in the house but a few minutes, when my good wife said to me:

“When you get thawed out you will find a little lamb in a basket over back of the stove; it was born this afternoon.”

Everett had brought the little creature over from the barn, in a chilled condition. I lifted the woolen blanket, and found there a wee lamb stretched out on the bottom, and to all appearances, dead. I laid my hand on the thin, white wool, and it was cold—as cold as though the little fellow had just been taken from ice-water.

“He’s dead,” I said promptly.

“I don’t think he’s *quite* dead, is he?” said Everett appealingly.

“If he isn’t dead now, he never will be,” I said promptly and decisively.

“Didn’t his nostril move just a little then?” asked the boy; but I had not seen any motion. I put my hand under the lamb’s head, and lifted it a few inches, and then withdrew my hand; the head fell back, and there was every indication, that the last spark of life was gone.

Everett placed his forefinger on the lamb’s eyelid, but the lid quickly dropped back again. Dead!

But on the shelf, under the clock, there was a copy of Randall’s Sheep Book; now do not get Randall and Kendall mixed. W. B. Kendall of Bowdoinham, Maine, is the “Sheep King of New England,” with a flock of sheep one-half as big as Job’s, of the olden time. But Henry S. Randall is the author of a book on sheep—a book that was published in 1864, and looks old fashioned and almost antiquated; but in that book I had read this:

“When a lamb is found chilled in cold weather,

i. e., unable to move or swallow, and perhaps with its jaws set, no time is to be lost. It cannot be restored by mere friction; and if only wrapped in a blanket and put in a warm room, it will die. It should at once be placed in a heated oven, or in a bath of water about as hot as can be comfortably borne by the hand. * * * * ”

So I said to Everett:

“Get a tub quick.”

And Everett rushed down to the basement and brought up a tub.

“Fill it half full of water,” I said, “water not hot enough to scald but considerably more than blood warm.”

And instructions were promptly obeyed.

Then I took the cold, apparently lifeless thing out of the basket, and put it into the tub, and moved him about, just keeping his head above the water.

“What tomfoolery is this,” I said in my heart; “swashing a dead lamb around in a tub of water!”

After four or five minutes, I lifted him out, and began to rub him vigorously with hot woolen cloths; then I worked his forelegs back and forth, and treated his hind legs in the same fashion; then I gave him some more rubbing.

Randall says in his book:

“It is astonishing from how near a point to death, lambs can be restored. It often appears literally like a re-animation of the dead.”

So I opened the oven door, and letting the lamb rest on the palms of my hand, just the way the nurse holds the new born babe that she wants you to take for a minute, I put him into the oven, and held him

there, until the wool was warm—almost hot—to the touch; then I turned him the other side up for a similar semi-baking.

I had been indulging in this apparent foolishness, thanking my stars that my neighbors could not look into the windows, and that no one but my good wife and Everett would ever know anything about it, when the lamb parted his lips and bleated—just one feeble cry; it was a good sign; it was more than a moving of the nostrils and shortly after that he winked. It was fifteen minutes later, when I discovered a movement which indicated that he was breathing, but his breaths were very short and quickly drawn.

It was six-thirty when I began to work on him, and at about seven-thirty, I said:

“Now that he is reviving, I will wash up for supper.”

At eight-thirty, my lamb which represented my first effort at sheep raising, and which brings my flock up to within six thousand, nine hundred and eighty-eight of Job's greatest prosperity, was able to stand on his feet, and no longer willing to be confined to a basket.

Then my neighbor, Wagner, came over and told me that unless the mother was brought over and put in the basement, where she could see the lamb, or if I deferred getting the two together until morning, the mother would probably not own her offspring.

Everett had already made a hurried trip to the nearest store and bought a rubber nipple, and the

lamb had several little lunches of hot milk and black pepper.

So my neighbor and Everett went to the barn, and brought over the mother; we turned the electrics on, in the basement, and carried her down and placed her in the coal-bin. The bin had been constructed several years ago for coal, but in the winter of 1918, there was nothing to prevent my coal-bin from being used for a sheep-pen.

But after they got her down into the coal-bin, and I went to see her, I nearly had a fit. I never saw such a reproachful look on any living thing in my life. That dear old mother sheep was over in the darkest corner of the black, empty coal-bin, facing the electric light which hung over head, and with an air of injured dignity, she seemed to say:

“What in the world are you thinking of? I am a mother; I am entitled to some kind of decent treatment, and here I am in a coal-bin in a cellar!”

That was about nine o'clock; at nine-thirty, my new acquisition was drawing a hearty meal from his mother's supply. At eleven o'clock, when I went down for a good-night look at my increasing flock, I was satisfied that all was well.

Mr. Wagner and Everett said however, that it would be necessary to bring over some hay and straw from the barn, to make a bed for the mother and the lamb, and this they did. Of course it was necessary to take the hay and straw through the kitchen and down the cellar stairs. It was shortly after this had been done that I laughingly said to my wife:

"This is fun; I would not mind if I had half a dozen lambs born in this way."

And the good woman, lover of home and defender of immaculate housekeeping, glanced at the scattered straw, chaff and hayseed which indicated the passageway from the back door to the foot of the cellar stairs, and exclaimed:

"Oh my land!"

This would seem to indicate that the lady of the house would prefer that the bin be filled with coal, and the sheep-pen be located somewhere in the barn; but nevertheless I am satisfied that sheep raising is a time-honored and dignified occupation.

Cordially yours,

LETTER XV

My Dear Friend L—:

I hardly know how to head this letter; it's a question whether to locate myself at Applehurst or Clover-Slope.

I do not think I have given you the history of this agricultural, patriotic adventure. Several years ago, this place—Applehurst it is now called—was for sale. I used to think the location was pleasant but the buildings were—well, I will inclose a couple of photographs, so you can see just what they *were*. I had often wondered why the place looked so forlorn, and I had conferred with others about it. One of my neighbors told me that in his opinion, it was because the driveway was on the north side of the house; he said he never saw a place with a north drive-way that looked cheerful and attractive. But I cannot accept that as a full explanation, because the place has lost some of its apparent gloom, and the drive-way remains where it was before I purchased the place.

A man had bought the place one November day and had moved in; he lived there alone from November to March, occupied the front rooms, kept a flock of hens in what had been the kitchen for the previous occupant. He told me the day I purchased that he had never seen the farm; he came in November when there was snow on the ground, and he was selling in March, while there was still a good body of

snow over it. He wanted two hundred dollars more than he paid for it, and declared that it was worth two hundred dollars to live there five months in winter and saw his own wood. He was probably right, but he could not convince me that I was under any obligations to pay him ten dollars a week for staying there; so I paid him exactly what he had paid, or rather, I gave him my note for the entire amount. I believe I had money enough at the time to pay for having the deed recorded, and that was about all. I used to open up the old house occasionally for a party of Good Will boys, and these occasions were sometimes mentioned in the *Record*.

One day a woman in Massachusetts wrote me that, if Applehurst—I had so named it because I had never heard of such a name before and because there were apple trees here—if Applehurst was not paid for, she would like to furnish the money. It was a surprise; the more I think about it, the more surprising it seems to me. And it has become more or less of a mystery also. She wrote that her husband, before he died, asked that she do something substantial for the founder of Good Will, and she wished to do it. But I did not know her husband, had never met him, and had never heard of anybody bearing that family name. I thought that sometime I would ask her for the family history, but she has been dead for several years, and I only know that I have two letters, in each of which she states that, during my life time she wished me to either occupy or use the place in some way, or let some of my family use it; at the end of my natural life, I may dispose of it as I choose. I wish now that I knew more about her.

and something about her husband—the man whose unusual family name she bore; but all I know is that, after his death, knowledge of his friendly regard for me burst upon my vision and disappeared, much as a meteor sometimes flashes before us, sheds a glow on our path, and vanishes; we know nothing of the meteor—from whence it came, or wither it went; we only recall from time to time that we saw it and cannot forget.

The time came when I could do something to the buildings and I did it. Buildings, if left to themselves, run down; not unless made to do so, do they ever run up. The buildings at Applehurst had been on the down grade for a good many years; I attempted to improve them, and that's when Applehurst got into my heart; the more we do for anybody or anything, the greater our affection. I did just enough to that old house to come to love it.

Last summer I found that Applehurst was not big enough for real farming—not enough land for pasture, etc. I had a neighbor whose land joined mine on the north, and sloped away toward Good Will.

He had rented Applehurst—the land—for a few years because his farm was too small; he rented it until war was declared, and I wanted to join the army of producers. Last fall he wanted to sell so he could go south—as far as Virginia, at least—to a warmer climate. Just then I received a legacy from the estate of an honored and loved friend; I bought my neighbor's farm, and called it Clover-Slope—it slopes to the north, and there is a clover field on it. The man bought a farm twelve or fifteen miles fur-

ther north and probably finds it as comfortable there as he would have found it in Virginia.

What do you say; did I blunder? Perhaps I did; I might have invested that legacy in Liberty bonds, but it isn't any great effort to clip coupons twice a year; I had a feeling I would like to be *doing* something, and the joining of Applehurst and Clover-Slope offers the opportunity. I may change the names; that is, I may drop "Applehurst" and "Clover-Slope," and invent some name that will cover both places.

When I think of the four-dollar-a-bushel potatoes that I put into the ground up here last spring and never saw again; when I think of the tons of commercial fertilizer at fancy, yes, almost fabulous prices that I covered up in the moist soil; when I think of the seed beans, at twelve dollars a bushel, that I buried and that never came up, I am half convinced that I might appropriately call this hill: "The Place of Buried Treasure." It is a rather long name, I admit, but not much longer than "Manchester-by-the-sea." It might suggest to some impressible adventurer, that Captain Kidd's ill-gotten gains were somewhere under my fields, and result in nocturnal diggings for silver and gold. You might think of me as erratic, if my next letter to you from this hill-top should be dated "The Place of Buried Treasure, April 20th, 1918," so I have almost decided that I will hold to the original nomenclature "Applehurst" and "Clover-Slope," until after another harvest; then I can either continue the names as they are, or I can shorten "The Place of Buried Treasure" to "Treasure Hill" and then no one but my confidential

friends will know whether the treasure in 1918 was buried or dug up; in other words, I will know and I will let you know next fall, whether I get back the money I am spending in an effort to do my "bit" in the task of producing food for a hungry world.

Cordially yours,

LETTER XVI

My Dear Friend L—:

Do you recall that some months ago I wrote you a letter from the hill-top? It was a letter in which I was telling you about the number of bushels of oats, wheat, potatoes, beans and other products that had been harvested on these homely acres in the autumn of 1919. In the midst of the report I was interrupted by a caller; a thirteen year old boy who had come to Applehurst to see me—a boy from Good Will. The boy—"Shanghai" I called him—suddenly and without warning told me that he loved me, and, upon urgent request from me he explained why I had so big a place in his heart. Do you remember that I exclaimed in my letter to you after he had gone:

"Hanged be wheat-raising, and hanged be potatoes and cabbages, short horn carrots, yellow-eyed beans and turnips; and hanged be dollars and cents!"

Well I have something more to tell you; it is a kind of sequel to that very simple but truthful incident.

I published that letter in the *Good Will Record* as a "Letter from Applehurst" just as this is likely to be published.

Now there was living at that time in this state a lawyer; he was a man of fine instincts, always recognizing the best and standing for it—a gentleman.

He was a successful lawyer, for he had become the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Once, at least, each year he wrote me a brief note and inclosed a check for the Good Will Homes and Schools, but I did not know that he ever looked into the pages of the *Good Will Record*. A few days after the issue containing my letter to you was mailed I received a note from the Chief Justice, and it read thus:

“Your letter from Applehurst in the *Good Will Record* received today is one of the most touching I ever read. Here is a little present for Shanghai—the boy with a grateful heart.”

It was a fine thing to do and I wrote expressing my appreciation, and, having done that, I sent for Shanghai one day and asked him to come to the open fire on the hearth-stone at Applehurst. He responded promptly to the friendly summons, as I felt quite sure he would, and we were sitting again before the blazing birch.

“Suppose,” I said to him, “suppose you should have five dollars come to you to spend just as you chose; suppose it should come to you just as though it dropped right out of the sky—what would you do with it?”

I had not told him what had happened or even hinted at it; but the boy seemed to recognize the seriousness of the question and became very thoughtful. There was a long pause. I waited patiently because I knew Shanghai, and I felt morally certain that the outcome of it all,—whatever he might say at first—would be a rod and reel. Shanghai is a born angler and the boys say that fish will

find his hook when they will pay no attention to any other lure.

"I don't hardly know," he said at last. "I know one thing; I wouldn't get clothing with it, because I'm well clothed for the rest of the year. You see I have this sweater and leggins and moccasins and everything for comfort."

With as much as that settled, I knew where we would come out in the end, and very soon Shanghai was explaining that he had a fish rod, but it "wasn't much of a one," and he had a reel but there was something the matter with it, and he never knew which way it was going to work whenever he had a strike. And so, after still further consideration, it was decided that there was nothing more desirable than a good fishing outfit.

Then I told him that I had a check for five dollars—a gift to him—and I would hand him the money the next morning, and he could select his rod and reel. Shanghai was delighted for a moment and then he became serious again. His mobile features told me that something had not been adjusted as it should be.

"I wonder," he said with some hesitation, "I wonder if you would be willing to select it for me; seems to me it would be more like a gift, and I'd feel it more if you handed me the things yourself, than it would if I should go into a store and just pick them out and pay for them as if I'd earned the money."

"Very well, my boy, it shall be as you wish, and I will make the purchase."

Then I wrote to the Chief Justice and told him of

the decision. His Honor replied in the following language:

“Many thanks for your kind letter of January tenth, telling of your interview with the boy. Your description of it raises him in my estimation still further, and I shall be glad if my little present makes him happy. I hope you will find just what he needs for a present, and the rod and reel strike me as most suitable. If you need more to make the outfit what it should be do not hesitate to spend it and let me know.”

Then the flu came; I was sick and weeks passed, but finally the purchase had been made, costing a little more than the value of the check, and Shanghai was again summoned. We sat in front of the fire again, just at sunset of a short, wintry day. And when the lad rose to go he remarked, as he held the rod and reel in his hands:

“I’m going home tonight happier than I ever went before in my life,”

And, if I read his illuminated countenance aright, the lad was speaking the truth.

One day, a few weeks later, I had cooked a simple lunch for myself and was eating it alone in the kitchen of this old house, when I looked toward the road. Coming up over the hill, keeping step, heads in the air, were three boys; each boy wore a cap on the back of his head and carried a fish rod resting on his shoulder, as a soldier carries his rifle. It was a goodly sight, and I smiled. Then said I in my heart:

“Isn’t that fine! The ice is out of the brooks and those little chaps are headed for Marten Stream.

They *think* they are going to catch some trout, and they are just as mistaken as they can be. They won't get a thing on this dark, cold day; but they think they will, and that's the beauty of it. What a beautiful thing is the hopefulness of youth—the perennial expectancy of boyhood. And they are having a good time, and Shanghai is one of them, with his new outfit of steel rod, a reel and silk line. A happy time to you my laddies; you don't catch anything today, but that does not matter, for you are hoping and expecting and you are breathing a bracing air and you are taking a brisk walk. Blessed are ye in thy innocent sport today."

At half past four, that afternoon, I was in the orchard, pruning a tree that stood in dire need of attention. So absorbed was I in my occupation that I did not notice the three boys approaching until Shanghai, leading the way, was near me. He came nearer; his hands were behind his back. He came closer to me and then held a brook trout before my astonished eyes.

"I've had some luck today," said Shanghai exultantly, "sixteen inches long!"

The boys did not stay long, because their trophy from Marten Stream, with its silver-white belly and shining ebony back, and its spots of carmine and blue and gold must be exhibited to others before its beauty faded.

And so off they went, while I returned to my rather prosaic task and meditated on the "hopefulness of youth, the perennial expectancy of boyhood," and the oft repeated statement that fish would actually

take Shanghai's hook at times when they would pay no attention to other people's lures.

The next day—Sunday—N. H. Hinckley, the Assistant Supervisor at Good Will called me on the telephone. It was nine o'clock in the morning.

"Are you going to be at Applehurst all day, today?" he asked.

"I expect to be, but why?" I said.

"Shanghai thinks he would like to go up and spend the day with you and have you cook that trout and he will share it with you."

In my heart I said:

"Blessings on that boy," but over the line to the Assistant Supervisor I said:

"Good! send him up."

Shanghai and I agreed that it would be a burning shame or at least a frying shame, which is probably just as bad or worse, to cut that beautiful trout into short pieces and drop them into the fat. Our instinct and our reason united—the fish must be baked.

Somewhere I have read a recipe for cooking a pickerel; it begins with these words:

"Take a pickerel three feet long—."

I have always wanted to follow the instructions implicitly, but thus far I have not been able to meet the first requirement. I suspect there may be directions hidden away in this house somewhere for baking a trout—instructions that begin with the words "Take a square-tailed trout sixteen inches long," but I could not find them. So the boy and I were left to our own judgment. I hunted for a baking dish but there is none in the house; the

nearest to it is a tin consisting of twelve cups, all joined together for the baking of graham gems or cup-cakes, and the like. We decided to use it.

First we filled each of the cups with hot water; then we whittled three cedar sticks white and clean, and laid them across the tin so the trout would rest upon them while in the oven. Then we cut three deep gashes cross-ways of the trout and put strips of fat bacon in each gash; then, after a sprinkling of salt we put the tin, laden with the trout, into the oven.

Of course there were other things to do—potatoes to boil, turnips to mash, the table to set and the like, and all the while we talked of what was in the oven. And when all things were ready we opened the oven door and indulged in “ah’s” and “oh’s” as the tin bearing the trout was carefully taken out, the trout done to a delicate brown, the slices of bacon being crisp and appetizing.

There was a big platter upon a high shelf that I think had not been touched in a year; that platter had to come down from its high perch for service. There was room for another trout—yes for half a dozen—on it, but that did not matter; the surplus room on the platter added much dignity. Then the blessing was asked and the feast began.

“Do you know,” said the boy, looking across the table, “I didn’t sleep much last night. I went to bed about half past nine, but I lay awake until after midnight. Every time I shut my eyes I would see that trout just coming out of the water on the end of my line—well, it would wake me up again. And

the first thing when I awoke this morning I could see that trout just breaking water."

And behold, while we talked of the beautiful fish and how he was caught, and the rod and reel that were used to catch him—as we talked about the fish, I say, suddenly we discovered that there was no longer any fish to talk about; a few bones on my plate and a few in front of the lad—only this and nothing more.

That was last spring. The other day—a day in August—Shanghai and I were out on Marten Stream; it was raining and we were under a tent, watching the struggles of a camp-fire as it slowly succumbed to the dripping of the clouds. I spoke to my comrade about that trout and the pleasant time we had disposing of him.

"Did I ever tell you just how long that fish was?" asked Shanghai.

"Yes indeed," I replied, "he was sixteen inches long."

"He was longer than that," said Shanghai.

"Careful," I exclaimed, "careful boy; you told me it was sixteen inches. Then I *heard* he was sixteen and a half."

"Yes," he replied, "but that was when I was on my way home with it. I had measured it with the joint of my thumb. When I got home Mr. N. H. Hinckley measured him with a foot rule, and he was seventeen inches—just *exactly* seventeen."

"Oh, Shanghai, it's always that way," I exclaimed; "fish like that usually grow an inch at a time for a year after they are caught."

But I must close this letter. I might moralize

a bit, but you are not looking for a sermon tacked onto the end of this rather unsatisfactory epistle. You can easily guess what I would say if I added any comment to a simple recital; you can see that there are all sorts of investments in this world—ways of investing money, time, thought, and some investments bring better returns than others.

The Chief Justice invested money; I invested time; both investments added a bit to the sum total of happiness in this world. I only wish the Chief Justice might have shared the trout with Shanghai and me, for after all there was enough for three. Yes; and I wish that you too might have had a taste of that Sunday dinner.

Cordially yours,

LETTER XVII

My Dear Friend L—:

My fireplace smokes like fury. This may surprise you and I never intended you should know it; you know that there are some facts that can be suppressed without deception.

I do not mean that the fire-place always smokes; it is only occasionally that it offends, but today it is in one of its disagreeable moods. Ordinarily, if I come up here alone, with leisure to experiment and not caring if the atmosphere in the room smells of burnt birch, the smoke rolls up chimney with never a trace of it beyond the sheet-iron hood that comes down over it like a visor of a cap shading a villain's eyes; but if I come up here a few minutes in advance of some caller just to get things started and to create a cheery atmosphere in the room, or if I bring some friend with me to share the joy of kindling the flame, this fire-place will send out soft, wooly clouds of smoke, thick and white, which proceed to disseminate themselves—if smoke clouds ever do disseminate—until it becomes the old story,

House full, hole full
Can't catch a bowl full."

I learned long ago, that if I leave a certain door open two or three inches the smoke will all go up the chimney; but sometimes I do not think to do this until my eyes begin to smart.

I think you know that I like to do something different or have something a little different from others. For instance the first year I farmed here at Applehurst I sent away and got some oats for seed—wonderful, unprecedented, almost miraculous according to the seed catalogue—and I watched them till harvest time. I have a photograph of myself in that oat field in late June—my head just above the oats; I had a prodigious crop of straw and an amazing lot of chaff.

No one around here keeps guinea hens, so I invested in these interesting fowls, and had a pair around here “filing saws,” or at least it sounded like it, until one of them died of *arterio-sclerosis*, and the other followed from no apparent cause. I think I reported my loss at the time.

I contemplated getting a peacock, but the winters are too severe in Somerset County; no one in the vicinity has a peacock and it would be different. And so would a jackass or a zebra or a camelopard but there are difficulties in the way of each.

Last winter I hit on a scheme that promised to be profitable—not from a monetary standpoint, but in pleasure, in satisfaction and in a sense of having something different. No one around here raises ring-necked pheasants; they would be a little different, and to occasionally see these beautiful creatures as I strolled through the woods or along the hedges would, indeed, be gratifying. It is understood now that this particular breed of pheasants will prosper wherever the ruffed-grouse or partridge does. The grouse are very prosperous in the Good Will woods and also on my own woodlands. So, through the

kindness and co-operation of friends at Augusta—the state capitol—I secured a setting—or a sitting—of pheasant's eggs. I was about to purchase some bantam hens to sit on them when I learned that a Rhode Island Red hen, of medium or light weight, would do just as well or better.

I wish now I had kept account of the time I devoted to that biddy and the treasure I had committed to her care. Her task was too important to be carried out in the hen-roost with others of her kind. She was to brood over something vastly more interesting than just ordinary hen-eggs; she had a small house all to herself and the door was kept closed so nothing would disturb her.

She had the most cordial, and the sweetest disposition of any hen I was ever associated with; she showed a spirit of co-operation quite unlike most hens engaged in a similar task. Sometimes I would go in the house to see her—she was sitting in an old cook-house, in a nest on the ground, so the eggs could have more moisture than ordinary hen-eggs require—and she never made any fuss. If I went close to her because I wanted to see whether the eggs were all there or whether the rats had disturbed them, she never gave the idiotic squawk which is indulged in by some sitting hens; she would just raise her feathers around the edge of the nest, and in a low, confidential but somewhat accelerated cluck, she would seem to say:

“Gracious, do be careful; if you must look at the eggs, just remember that they are the smallest, tenderest, brittliest eggs ever put under a Rhode Island

Red of my avoirdupois. Remember, too, that a cracked egg never yields a chick."

Then I would investigate, and as soon as I was through, she would gather her feathers back close again and settle down for the long, long brooding.

Seven of the eggs hatched; something happened to three of the tiny creatures, but the other four grew and prospered. They had every attention; the choicest food and distinguished consideration were always accorded them.

When they were the size of quails they began to take care of themselves and to show distinctive characteristics; they were different. Then they began to be shy. It was interesting to note the marking of their plumage as they neared maturity; but the time came when I seldom saw them. I would say to Leslie:

"Are my pheasants all right?"

He would reply:

"I think so; I saw three of them last evening when I fed the poultry and I saw one an hour before in the orchard" or some similar report.

The last time I saw any of them one was flying along the wild-cherry trees that skirt the old wall. This was all to my liking; the experiment was proving a success. Mr. James, of the State House, at Augusta, suggested that I had better keep them in confinement through the winter, in order to be sure of eggs next spring; but I was trying an experiment. Would they stand our winter successfully? If so, I would secure not one setting or sitting—of eggs but several, next spring, and pheasants would be a common but always a beautiful

sight hereabouts. The land, between the buildings at Applehurst and the cottages at Good Will is just what pheasants like—woods, open fields, hedges, old fences, tall grass; there was every prospect that they would winter all right, but I wanted to be sure.

When they came into full plumage, there was another gratifying and encouraging feature; two were males and two were females. As near as I could calculate the woods at Good Will and Applehurst were destined to be full of pheasants and of interest in due time: pheasants and partridges!

Here comes the *denouement*. “If you have tears to shed” over a matter like this, “prepare to shed them now.” Last night my son was at some kind of a social occasion in Fairfield village. At the banquet table the man who sat next to him, asked if he knew whether there were or ever had been any pheasants in this town. The man explained that he had seen several and had told his neighbors about them; his neighbors would not credit him because no one hereabouts had any pheasants—that was all there was to it.

My son informed the inquirer that the pheasants which he had seen were doubtless some which his father had raised the past summer.

I understand the man lives about three miles from Applehurst. Alas! No one can tell where those pheasants are by this time. They appear to be scudding toward the equator like escaped toy-balloons before a North-Easter; they may be in Tennessee before Christmas for all I know.

Alas, for my correspondence about pheasants and

pheasants' eggs last spring! Alas, for the book I purchased giving the history of the pheasant tribe and full instructions how to rear them! Alas, for the time that Mrs. Rhode Island Red spent brooding and then rearing the tiny creatures through pin-feather-hood to pheasantry! Alas, for the time that Leslie, under full pay, in this year of big wages devoted to them! Alas, for the scratch-feed that they ate—scratch feed that should have been devoured by my ordinary chickens—Plymouth Rocks and Rhode Island Reds—just like what everybody else around here owns and feeds!

In view of the depressing developments of the last few days—Leslie says he has not seen a pheasant since last Wednesday, and it is now Saturday—in view, I say, of the disappointing events of this week, and the sudden crushing of my ambition I know you will pardon me if I summon my muse, and so, with apologies to “Old Black Joe” if indeed apologies to anybody or anything should be wrested from me under the circumstances, I pen these melancholy lines:

Gone are the pets that were hatched so long ago,
Gone from my fields where they had a chance to grow.
Gone from these heighths to meadows damp and low,
I seem to hear my pheasants' croaking: “Here we go!”

While I am writing these lines to you my cows and heifers are browsing around the house, filling up on bunches of sweet clover that escaped the harvest of aftermath; my sheep, just home from the pasture, are in the unfenced orchard near the barn, alternating between the garden with its remnant of cabbage and cauliflower and the grass still green

under the apple trees; over at the poultry house, cockerels and pullets are gulping corn and other grain provided for their growth or ominously scattered for their fattening; in the cellar, safely harvested is my crop of potatoes, carrots and whatever else I have that should be stored in such a place; but all these things are just like my neighbors' and like everybody else's in Somerset Country—nothing different. How different pheasants are, or would be if I had any; but the addled-pated ingrates are gone.

I am undecided as to what I will do; one way would be to let my entire brood of pheasants continue on their journey to Florida and the Gulf and forget it all; but, as a matter of fact, my spunk is up now and I am questioning whether I won't raise at least half a dozen broods of pheasants next spring and then see. I'll let you know later what conclusion I reach and in the meantime, I have no doubt you will extend to me so much sympathy as the situation in your judgment, seems to require. There is continued close time on ring-neck pheasants in Maine; why did I not wring their precious necks while they were still residents of my poultry yard.

Pleasantly, but not pheasantly,

Yours,

LETTER XVIII

My Dear Friend L—:

It is a long time since I have written to you, but my silence means little; I fear, too, that you will say that my letters do not mean much anyway. Since writing you I have celebrated my birthday again. As you know, I do not hesitate to celebrate my birthday any time when it is convenient and there is a good cake in sight, and so these celebrations have been scattered through the years coming in December or January, May or November, March or August, as the fancy seized me; but the celebration I refer to now came on the anniversary and so it was celebrated in July—on the twenty-seventh day, if I must be exact.

When it came time to cut the cake, and the pleasant task was assigned to me, I took occasion to tell the assembled friends that while sixty-seven years seems short enough as one looks back upon it, such a period is long enough to admit of many things.

In my case sixty-seven years proved to be long enough for me to be weaned, and to learn to creep and to walk: long enough to learn how to swim and to skate, to ride horseback and to coast down long hills; to weed onions and hoe corn and potatoes, to use a scythe and a rake; long enough to learn how to play marbles and ball, tennis and golf, quoits and mumblety peg; long enough to learn how to row a boat, to paddle a canoe, and how to use a gun and

rifle, a rod and reel; long enough to wear kilt skirts, short pants, long trousers, Prince Albert coats, starched collars, derby hats, and spectacles; long enough to use a razor, to raise a mustach and to have a touch of rheumatism; long enough to part with a full set of teeth—first crop—and to suffer with toothache, and to reluctantly part with the second and final crop one at a time; long enough to master the alphabet, the multiplication table, and to get some idea of English grammar, Latin and Greek, algebra and plane geometry; time enough to learn the names of trees and birds and fish and animals and flowers; time enough to learn to love the best in painting, in sculpture, in literature; time enough to face the problems of youth, and the great issues of life—the choice of a vocation, the place religion shall have in one's life and just what is the relative place of dollars and cents in the final estimate of life and its value; time enough to be made a voter and to vote in town meetings, state elections and national campaigns; time to search the scriptures, to sing and to pray; time to see the introduction of the banana, the commercializing of the tomato as an article of food, and the exploiting of "breakfast foods" until they came into universal use; time to witness the introduction of the sewing machine, the mowing machine, the reaper, the gasoline engine, automobiles, motor-cycles, trolley cars, motor-boats; time to welcome the telephone, the phonograph, photography, moving pictures, electric lights, wireless telegraphy, wireless telephony; time to learn to cook some things, to play the organ, sing bass and to appreciate good music,

to camp out, to bivouac, to climb mountains, explore caves, to cross the Atlantic, to be sea-sick and to want to die; time to hear great preachers who in their time were persuasive, eloquent, convincing—Henry Ward Beecher, T. DeWitt Talmadge, W. H. H. Murray, Joseph Parker, D. L. Moody; time to mourn over the assassination of three presidents—Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield and William McKinley; time to weep at the open grave of father, mother and sister; time to form the choicest of friendships and to cherish them as the most valuable assets of life; time to preach more than four thousand times, and to talk in public on other occasions more times than I have counted; time to meet the dearest girl in the world, to fall in love, to be married, to set up house keeping, to be four times a father and seven times a grandfather; time to catch sunfish, chub, perch, pickerel, the gamey black-bass, trout, salmon, eels, horn-pout, suckers; time to hunt plover, quail, partridge, rabbits, deer, gray-squirrels and wood-chucks; time to see the rise and decline of the Good Templars, the waxing and waning of the Boys' Brigades, the beginning of the Y. P. S. C. E. movement, the organization of the Boy Scouts, the growth of the Y. M. C. A.; time to witness the change from the open saloon everywhere to the days of national prohibition; time to watch the progress of the civil war, the abolition of slavery, the beginning and end of the Spanish war, the exposure of German design and the humiliation of the German government; time to have measles, mumps and whooping cough in childhood and to watch my children through the

same ailments; time to be baptized, to baptize my bride, and my two sons and my two daughters; time to be authorized to teach in public schools, licensed to preach, and to be initiated into a great secret order; time to meet you as a stranger, to see our acquaintance ripen into a friendship, which has increased in value until I cherish it as one of my choicest possessions.

Once there was a man living in this vicinity who often spoke of his varied experiences. He had worked in a shoe shop a stated number of years, had spent four years in college, had taught many years, had traveled extensively and done many other things. One of my neighbors became a little skeptical and adding together the years which this man said he had devoted to various interests in life, he made him out to be about one hundred and twenty years old. Measured in that way I must be older than I claim. I was eight years old before I went to school and was in public school six winters; I was four years in the Guilford Institute, taught two winters in Connecticut, spent two years in the State Normal School, taught three years in Rhode Island, and was four years in pastoral work. Three years I served under the American Sunday School Union, and three years as state evangelist. I have been editor of the *Good Will Record* thirty-three years, a registered guide in the Maine woods, I think, six years, a married man forty years, an ordained minister forty-one years, a director of the Good Will Home Association thirty-one years—a total of one hundred and eighty-six years, but I

am not nearly as old as that, as you fully understand; I am only sixty-seven, but gradually growing older.

Affectionately yours,

LETTER XIX

My Dear Friend L—:

The corn is in the shock; the potatoes, beets and carrots are in the cellar; the autumnal haze is on the hills.

I am in a retrospective mood looking back over the weeks that have elapsed since I wrote you in seed time. I am rather interested and amused to discover that, whenever, in my thought, I attempt to renew the summer months, my "days off" stand out in bold relief; mind you I am saying "days off" and not "off days" which are another proposition. And my days off are convincing rather than reassuring. Most of those days—the ones that stand out so boldly—were spent at Audubon Rapids on Marten Stream, in my little tent, which though so near, as the crow flies, that one night the family in this house heard the blows of my axe as we—a comrade and myself—chopped wood at bedtime for our camp-fire, I was as isolated as I would have been in almost any camp within a hundred miles.

One of the incidents which convinces me rather than re-assures me is this:

I was at camp Audubon; my comrade that day was a small boy who had come out to spend a few hours and he proved to be inspiring company. This round faced, pearly toothed chap had many questions to ask me, and in turn I asked many ques-

tions of him—questions about his parents whose care, through no fault of his own, he had lost.

It was the middle of the afternoon when I said to him: "All my guests in camp are treated just alike—it's the same program for each and every one. When any one comes out here as you have we take a swim together in Marten Stream, then I beat him at pitching horse-shoes—usually about two games out of three—then we start the fire and cook supper, and while we are doing that we get ready for the evening camp-fire out there, right in front of the tent. Are you ready, Maurice?"

The lad's face brightened when I said "swim", but he looked thoughtful and skeptical when I talked as I did about my skill at horse-shoes; anticipation shone on his boyish features as I mentioned the two camp-fires—one for cooking and the other purely for esthetic purposes.

A few minutes later, ready for the swim, we stood side by side at the brink of Marten, ready for a plunge.

Suddenly the lad looked me in the face—a kind of daring defiant glance it was—and said:

"I can swim across Marten Stream quickern you can!"

"You can?" I said. "All right, Mosey, if you can do it, *go ahead*," and I instantly dove deep and made my best effort. When I came up Mosey was six feet ahead of me and gaining every instant. We perched on a water-soaked log on the opposite side—Mosey having won out by about ten feet, and he exclaimed:

"Said I could and I did!"

"Of course you did, boy, of course you did;" I said, still panting from my effort, but your hair isn't wet. I took a deep dive and you didn't dive at all."

"All right," retorted Mosey "I'll beat you going back, and I'll dive, too."

Before I had time to arrange any preliminaries or to reply, Mosey's feet were in the air for a fraction of a second as he dove for the return trip. This time I omitted the retarding dive and followed; but Mosey was standing in shallow water on the opposite side, while I still had nine feet to travel, and even at that, I was puffing and blowing.

"Said I could and I did" laughed my comrade.

"Of course you did" I responded, "of course you did; but look at my broad chest; see these shoulders that I have to push through the water, and then look at your own little shoulders and your teenyweeney chest. Of course you did; but if I were a boy, Mosey—"

Alas, my friend, as I have said, the incident was convincing. It convinced me that, though a man of my age may recuperate in the woods, and he may even, to some extent, regain his youth, there are things at which he can never excell again; about my time of life every man must meet his Waterloo at the swimming hole or he must keep away from it to avoid humiliation.

There was another incident equally convincing, and this came at the close of a "day off." It was in the corn-roasting season and for the end of a perfect day I had invited nine Good Will boys to a corn-roast at the "Murray Tablets" here at Applehurst.

It was the harvest moon and near its full. What a night! The tablets, as you know, are on the brow of a hill looking off over an open country, beyond which are woods and still farther away, the mountains. Once, in the evening we sent cheers to the westward hoping they would reach the ears of the junior class of the Good Will High school as it enjoyed a corn roast at Audubon Rapids, or still another group of corn roasters at Camp Navajo in nearly the same direction; but we got no response.

While the fire was burning, and we were waiting for the flames to reduce the birch to a bed of hot coals for the roast, a game of leapfrog was proposed. I deliberately entered this game. The master of ceremonies suggested that I go up ahead and I did; "still further" he shouted as the other fellows fell in line behind me, and so I went still further toward the mountains over in Franklin County, till the line was ready and we all bent into position; over the bending forms of his comrades he came until he reached me, and then he seemed to fairly soar like a hawk, above me on his ninth leap and he took his position ten feet beyond my place. Oh, it was sport—great sport—as this leaping squadron of young athletes, following him scaled my bended form and went flying over the backs of those who had preceeded him. On they came, chuckling, laughing, each and every one an embodiment of physical alertness and sprightliness—the sixth, the seventh, the eighth, the ninth. All had now gone over me and it was my turn. I raised my head and looked forward. There were nine leaping frogs, each posed and poised and waiting for me to make

my flying leap over each and every one; and the last in the line, as I saw him in the moonlight seemed to be pretty well over toward the mountains in the next county. Horrors! What if I should fail? What if I, at sixty-seven, should prove to be less supple than the rest of them? What if I should get half way down the line and my muscles should fail me and I should come down on some luckless fellow's back, right amid-ship, and break his spinal column; what if the victim of my fool-hardiness should go through life maimed, disabled, suffering from curvature of the spine? What if I should get so jarred in the nine leaps before me that I should have to go to bed the next day for a series of massages? What if, before I got to the end, I should lose my poise as I sailed over one of those trusting playmates, and should break my own neck? What would the public say when it read that the editor of the *Good Will Record* disabled one of his playmates and was himself instantly killed in a game of leap-frog while trying to carry his two hundred and fifteen pounds of avoirdupois over the seventh or eighth boy in line? What would *you* say? And what kind of an epitaph could any one prepare to cover such an inglorious demise? These thoughts, and others, equally disquieting, and annoying rushed through my mind as I posed for an instant before I should start on my flying career over the leading forms stretching in an unbroken line so long that it might as well have been nine miles as only nine rods in length. It was an awful moment. It suddenly occurred to me that if a fatal accident should occur it would break up the corn

roast to which I had looked with much anticipation. Leap frog was not on the program any way; I was under no obligations even though I had proposed the game. I hesitated. Then I shouted:

“Go ahead boys; play the game; I’ll fix the fire.”

It was a simple incident but, as I have already said, it was convincing; I was so fully convinced of something then and there that I shall never get in line again for a game of that kind. Let the kids leap and bounce and play sky-rocket if they choose; let them gambol like lambs in the pasture at sunset—I am no lamb; but I am convinced now that for a man past sixty-seven leap frog is out of the question.

Another convincing incident, on a “day off” and I’m through for this letter. One day a Good Will boy, Francis Howard by name, and I were out at Audubon Rapids. We had spent several hours together in happy comradeship. Francis wore a sleeveless sweater. I noticed the muscle on his arm and laid the end of my forefinger on it.

“*Where* did you get that?” I asked, with heavy emphasis on the “where.”

“Where’d I get it” repeated Francis, “got it working. It was work that did it.”

Then I laid my left hand over my right bicep muscle, reverently, and said:

“But look at that!”

“Oh, yes,” said Francis, mockingly, “I know where you got that.”

“Where did I get it?” I queried.

“You got it sharpening lead pencils in the office; and it’s what I call *pudding*.”

“Look here, young man” I exclaimed with a mock

show of indignation bordering on wrath “you better be careful—mighty careful—what you say about my muscle. It may not be as hard as yours, but it’s mine, young man, it’s mine. Don’t you ever say ‘pudding’ to me again. If you want to be knocked flat and then thrown into Marten Stream, just say *pudding*. Do you understand?”

Francis assured me that he understood. “Of course I’ll not say pud—I mean, oh, I mean I’ll not say the word you don’t want me to say. But the word pud—I—I mean the word you don’t want me to say is a good one; it stands for something.”

Francis and I talked about the jewel-weed—where it got its name and why it is called “Touch-me-not;” we discussed the yew with its delicate waxen berry as it grows on the banks of Marten; we studied the partridge berry and its flaming fruit; we talked of other things until Francis suddenly changed to a new subject and said:

“We had a good dinner today out at Golden Rule cottage.”

I paid no attention to the remark.

“I *say*, we had a fine dinner today in our cottage.”

I gave no heed to his palaver.

“I *remarked* that we had a dinner—a *mighty* good dinner—today in the cottage” he added.

“You did” I at last responded; “what did you have?”

“We had—we had roasted meat, and potatoes—this year’s potatoes—and brown gravy, and string beans picked this morning and for dessert we had pud—I—mean we had, well, we had something

made of bread and milk and eggs and sugar and spice and—

“See here, my lad,” I said “you better be careful; you came dangerously near a break.”

“I *see* I did,” said the boy, and we talked about the kingfisher that had just followed the stream to the westward, the wood-pewee in the big hemlock and the chickadees that literally swarmed in the woods.

“Can you cook most everything?” queried Francis, breaking a silence of a couple of minutes.

“No” I replied “I can fry bacon and eggs, cook vegetables, make biscuits if I have to, but I don’t pretend to be much of a cook.”

“Can you make a pu—I—I mean can you make a *pie*?” piped the lad.

“Franc” I continued, “you just look out. Knocked flat, thrown into Marten Stream”—those are the expressions I used. “Don’t you say pudding—not to *me*.”

It was not far from the opening of the school year. Francis was to be in the freshman class and his studies proved to be an interesting topic of conversation, until he seemed to become very thoughtful—thoughtful almost to oppressiveness and then he remarked as he looked up to my face:

“There’s something I want to say but I can’t say it—I don’t know *how*.”

“Why not, Francis?”

“Well, there’s a word in what I want to say that I’m not supposed to use. It’s a good word and it ends in *ding*—d-i-n-g, ding,” and he chanted monotonously, ding, dong, ding dong, d-i-n-g-DING.

“*Careful*, Frankie, careful! Knocked flat; thrown into Marten Stream! Those are the very words.”

My dear friend, did you ever try to cure a young person of using an objectionable word by threatening a penalty. How did you come out?

Francis and I had enjoyed our outing; swiftly had the moments passed; bright and sunny had been the hours. The time came for us to part. It was sunset and we had walked out of the woods together. We came to the parting of the ways, and as we clasped hands, he looked up to me with a confidential air, and remarked in a low trusting tone:

“It’s a word that ends in ding;—d-i-n-g.”

We parted. He was almost out of hearing when I heard my name called. I paused and looked toward the west. Francis’ boyish form was silhouetted against the orange sky. He waved his hand and shouted: P-u-d-d-i-n-g—pudding, *pudding*, PUD-DING.

This letter is too long, far too long, but I started out to tell you what I had learned in my “days off” this year, and with apologies to Lord Byron—if apologies are called for—I am convinced that

My days are in the shady time of life.
The sprightliness and bounce of youth are gone.
The steady step, the arm-chair and the couch
Are best for me.

Joyously yours,

LETTER XX

Dear Miss M. E.—

Now that Christmas is past I must write you. The great day brought me many greetings from friends, and these tokens stirred varied emotions in my heart; but nothing that I received had the same effect that was produced by your unique gift. About a week before Christmas my good wife told me that a package had arrived by post; that it was addressed to me; that it was plainly marked as coming from yourself and that you would probably like to have it kept for me until Christmas day. So she kept it and I waited; I will not say that I waited in suspense, but I just waited. I cannot tell you just how I felt when Christmas morning came, and I opened the package and found the mouse-trap nestling in the bed of soft delicately tinted wool, and tied with red and green ribbon and baited with a pumpkin seed.

I place a high value on this gift. From a monetary standpoint I do not fancy it ranks very high—we used to buy these traps before the war two for five cents, not including the ribbon and a pumpkin seed—but I long since learned that there is more than one way of estimating a gift. As I understand it, you are familiar with the harrowing details of an experience I had up here at Applehurst a few months ago when a *mus domestica* started on a journey between me and a suit of underclothing which I chanced to be wearing that day. I confessed that

after the experience, I was a little undecided whether to sell Applehurst and start in somewhere else, or to attempt to exterminate *mus domestica* and all her tribe.

Your gift speaks no uncertain language; it says to me:

“Stay where you are; stand by your guns; annihilate the pesky rodents.”

I thank you for the inspiring message. With the trap you have sent me I believe I can do it, provided that pumpkin seed holds out, though why only one seed came with the trap I do not understand.

There is another matter which interests me just now; I would like to mention it more or less confidentially—probably less. Satisfied that there isn’t any money for me in farming, I am thinking of becoming a poet. Such an idea had never occurred to me until recently; but lately I have been reading considerable poetry and have got quite stirred up. No: do not think of me as pouring over Shakespeare’s Sonnets or Milton’s “Paradise Lost”, or Bryant’s “Thanatopsis” or Poe’s “Raven” or any of the poetry which claimed our attention a few years ago. I have been reading the very latest poetry—the very up-to-datest poetical effusions in this new age which follows the great war. Here, for instance, is part of a poem, reviewed in a magazine of national circulation:

“A sulphur-yellow chord of the eleventh
Twitches aside the counterpane.
Blasts of a dead chrysanthemum,
Blur.
Whispers of mauve in a sow’s ear;
Snort of a daffodil,
Bluster of zinnias hustling through nasal silences,
Steeplejack in a lace cassock

Piroutetting before a fly-blown moon.
 Soap-bubble groans where the wheezing planets
 Abandon the jig."

When I read this I began to enthuse. Then I read
 from another poem in which are such soul stirring
 bits of inspiration as this:

"My ears ring; I go blind; drops come on my forehead; I
 shake all over. I am afraid of going nuts.
 Get this.

I want to dare everything.
 I want to say there's a place
 Out here with potato blossoms
 And young frogs calling and
 Nobody home but a red sun
 Spilling hallelujahs over the prairie.

* * * * *

But something chokes me.
 I can't act like I used to.
 I go yellow as grass when there's no rain in July.

* * * * *

I'm telling you."

This arouses me to a high pitch of poetic fervor—
 that is, a high pitch of *modern* poetic fervor. I can
 keep quiet no longer; so I dash off the following:

I walked.
 A distant rumble, angry sky, a heavy clap of
 Thunder! A deluge, deep, dark, terrific.
 I walk some more and step
 Into a mud-puddle.
 I rage.
 The water creeps through a hole in the
 Bottom of my shoe. My shoe string
 Gets moist and dank with mud and slime.
 I hate
 Dank and muddy and slimy things
 Specially wet shoe strings.
 But my shoe string remains
 Dank, muddy, slimy.
 I don't like it.
 Ugh!

That satisfied my poetic aspirations—I mean my

modern poetic aspirations—for a time, but then I chanced to read the following lines of thrill and fire:

“If I could catch the green lantern of the firefly
I could see to write you a letter.”

Then I began to aspire again—do you wonder? Soon after I was lifted into a realm of mazy delight by the following:

“I want to shingle a house.
Sitting on a ridge-pole in bright breeze
I want to put the shingles on neatly.”

This last is the work, not of a poet, but a poetess. Think of the daring of her soul! What a flight of fancy! What a burning ambition! And the beautiful thing about it is that she can realize it; not all poetic fancies can materialize, but I see no reason why she should not sit on the ridge-pole and shingle to her heart's content, do you? I would fear, were she on my roof that she might put the shingles on but-end up if I didn't watch, but that is a matter of small import. The chief thing is that her poetic longing be gratified. But somehow the daring flaming lines fired me; I said to myself I, too, can be a poet—not one of the old school—not one of the Victorian age—but a modern poet. So I tried my hand again and feel sure the result will interest you. I intend the lines which follow as a preface to my “Complete Modern Poetical Works” in six or seven volumes:

I sing of huckleberries, porpoises, pink shrimps and mint.
My soul surges. I dip my pen in volcanic crater of violet lava.
If I could perch on yon
Pinnacle of steel tower I would
Wash my feet in the milky-way,
Brush my teeth with silvery
Moonbeams, ride on the tail of

Biela's split comet.

Oh, columbines, blue dandelions and blazing
Daffodils, white mice and horse-chestnuts,
Bantam roosters, telegraph poles and
Yellow-paint.

I pant; I stagger; I faint,
Pass me the catnip."

And I promise, too, that I will send you all my manuscript before anybody else sees it. Of course if I decide to continue to farm up here on the hill I will have no time for literary work, but in the words—the immortal words—of the poet above quoted

"I'm telling you."

Yours in poetic (modern) bliss,

P. S. Since writing the above I have had another inspiration—modern—and I may send you another poem at once. It is a revelry of polychromatic sentimentousness—a riot of cryptic sentimentality—a holocaust of modern poetic fervor. It is a wonder. Of course it is suggested by one of the above poems, but in place of a "fly-blown moon" I have "lunar maggots," and for "nasal silences" I have "snort of nostrils," and I have other advances in both thought and diction.

LETTER XXI

Dear Life Member, Manhattan:

There are three things which I must report to you before they escape my mind as things do in these busy days unless I give them prompt attention. You know that Good Will Farm, Applehurst and Clover-Slope—these pieces of property join—have been posted; in other words, hunting, trapping and the building of fires on these lands is forbidden and neatly painted signs announce the fact. The building of fires, except by permission from the Good Will office is forbidden for the sake of safety; the prohibition of use of fire arms is due to the fact that so many people are wandering about in these woods and over the trails that a shot fired anywhere might result in accident; trapping is under the ban because we want to encourage wild life in this vicinity, and also, if there is to be any trapping at all—for skunks for instance—there are always boys at Good Will who covet the privilege and they should have it, and permission can be granted to them.

Under these circumstances the sound of shot-gun or rifle in the woods hereabouts is disturbing, especially if it be on a Saturday when the boys are out and in—"out" of school and "in" the woods.

I was up here Saturday afternoon; two men and two boys were with me; we were putting down the foundations for the "Murray Tablets" which I will

write you about later and were very busy over a rather fascinating project.

I heard the report of a gun or rifle; it sounded as though it were in the Applehurst woods but far away. I said nothing. Ten minutes later I heard another report and this time much nearer—in fact, as near as I could judge, it was on Good Will's "Dartmouth Trail" where that trail crosses this farm.

There was no reason why any one should be shooting there, but several reasons why no one should be doing it.

I said to Henry, one of the boys who was working for me:

"Did you hear that shot?"

"I did," replied Henry.

"All right" I said, "drop that spade, get into those woods as quickly as you can, find the hunter, or the hunters, tell them that hunting is prohibited, ask their names, find out who they are and come back at once for we must finish work here this afternoon."

Henry started on the run. I think boys like to act as game wardens. But it seemed as though he would never come back, and I needed him. He finally returned and his report was preesented in three sections:

1. Two boys with a dog and gun said they were from Fairfield.

2. They did not know that hunting on the premises was forbidden and they will not hunt on this side the road any more, and

3. If I want to know their names I will have to find out.

Bless the boys! I don't care who they are, and I

won't try to find out their names; but I wonder if they had a State license.

Another thing I wish to report is of a different nature and not as interesting to me. An old friend whom I met on the main street of a busy city the other day told me, in response to a remark which I made, that his father-in-law used to say:

"When I sneeze, I notice that if I sneeze more than once I sneeze two or three times."

I would not attempt to argue the point with so observing a man as that father-in-law; but I mention his observation in order to introduce the statement that several times in my life, having done a thing once, I have done it two or three times.

One of the things is the dispatching of worn-out horses, and I have just had my third experience.

"Old Jess" my family horse is dead. She is dead because I decreed that it must be so. Jess never lived here at Applehurst—her domicile was at Willow-Wood, my real home. But she was a part of our life. Rev. John Todd, D.D., author of the "Index Rerum" and the "Student's Manual," while pastor of the Congregational Church in Pittsfield, Mass., owned a family horse which was greatly beloved in the household. Just before the church service one Sunday morning the horse died. Dr. Todd went to church and he preached; but, afterward he confessed that never before had horses got into the pulpit with him, but on that Sunday the old pet—the family horse, was in the pulpit all through the service. And somehow "Old Jess" is in the sitting-room here as I write—I can't keep her out of the house today; she is right here at the open fire. Yes—

terday, in obedience to my instructions she was led to a neighbor's stall and this morning she was led away to never come back again—led over into the back field and her life mercifully ended. For two years the event has been pending, but whenever I mentioned it there was always some one to plead that she be spared yet a little longer.

In a very ancient book—the oldest book we have—it is declared that the horse, “paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength; he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha, and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.”

But that was not “Old Jess.” She may have been a lineal descendant but if so it was “away back.”

Shakespeare described a horse, saying:

“Round-hoofed, short jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad breast, full eye, small head, and nostril wide;
High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide.”

But “Old Jess” would hardly answer to that description, though she had some most commendable qualities.

Long before Shakespeare's time proud Ninevah had her valiant men in red, and her streets were “filled with horses and chariots and the sound thereof.”

Rome gloried in chariots, swift horses and the

sound of wheels; I suppose some day a historian will record that the American republic gloried in gas wagons, chug carts and the sound of explosive engines.

We will miss old Jess.

There was no style about her but she could always be depended on for her best service; and she seemed all unconscious that there was anything lacking in her make up—any shortage of symmetry and grace. She went wherever bit and rein guided, and she went quite regardless of appearance or public comment. The driver might make all sorts of unfavorable comment on her appearance or worth but it mattered not to the patient creature—she would, before remarks of condemnation or reproach had anything more than escaped the lips of the unappreciative, start off, to the best of her ability, and drag the merciless or abusive critic wherever he wished to go; for her to know where her driver wished to go was to be on the way, diligent, uncomplaining; she knew no such thing as revenge or retaliation.

I used to sit out here on the porch at eventime, alone, listening to the faint sounds always in a place like this, when a day is dying; I used to linger here till the sun had disappeared beyond the hills of sapphire and the last drowsy insect had ceased its rasping for the day; then I would hear the sound of wheels—iron wagon tires grating on gravel road—and the measured trot of old Jess swinging into the gate-way. Then, as she reached the veranda she would stop, the precious freight of grandbabies would climb out of the carriage with laughter and all sorts of greeting, and jokes about old Jess' slow-

ness or homely gait, and Jess would give a twist of her head, stretch her neck downward and begin to eat dewey grass; she would wander a rod or two when left driverless in order to get the sweetest bunches of food—that was all; and whether an hour or three hours passed, when Jess and the carriage were wanted both would be found no farther from the stopping place than the poor old creature's love for succulent food led her.

Next summer there will be a change. I will be sitting here in the gloaming; I'll hear a light rolling sound, a modern vehicle will wheel into the yard and, making a majestic curve will sweep up to the doorway.

A chariot, a valiant horseman in red, the sound of the cracking of the whip and the hoof-fall of prancing horse? No. Poor, patient Jess, hitched to the two-seated carriage, puffing and panting, reminding me of the night she was over-driven and became wind-broke? No. Instead of Jess and the carriage a modern vehicle, five-seated, 1920 model, 35 H. P. 3-point suspension unit power plant, 4-cylinder engine, eccentric pump driven by spiral gears form crankshaft, tubular radiator, 12-volt single unit starter-generator with 12 volt storage battery, control lever on ball pivot with locking device for each speed, 60-mile speedometer, locking, ignition lighting switch, annular ball-bearing, ball-thrust release mechanism, hardened steel worm and worm wheel, semi-elliptic spring, dry multiple disc, tire pump, tire carrier with demountable rim, license bracket, ventilating windshield and electric horn.

Old Jess was such a simple creature—just four

feet, a mane, a tail, and a sleek neck; and this new arrangement sounds so complicated. And with all its complications it has no personality. The only way I will be able to tell whether it's mine that is coming or one that belongs to my nearest neighbor or to a man in Texas, Oregon or Rhode Island will be to look at the number. Alas for the monotony of it all!

But Old Jess is dead.

Do you know of anybody that wants to buy a two-seated carriage of uncertain age, a single harness that saw its best days sometime previous to 1917 and a whip? I am not quite sure I want to sell at any price; there is something pathetic about the whip, the harness and the carriage.

But Old Jess is dead.

Sincerely yours,

LETTER XXII

My dear Mr. L.—

I recall that in my boyhood days we used to have the "*American Agriculturist*" in our home from month to month. For me, personally, it was very interesting; neither father, nor any one else, seemed to care much about it but there was one item in the said "*American Agriculturist*" that rather staggered me. Each month it carried a motto purporting to be a statement of George Washington, the Father of his country, to the effect that agriculture was the most healthful, useful and noble employment of man. It was difficult for me to reconcile that statement with Washington's well known reputation for veracity.

I could not convince myself in those days that I was doing any particularly noble work when I crawled on my hands and knees in the onion field, from seven o'clock to six, stopping only an hour for noon; I could not see wherein I was doing a particularly honorable thing when I stowed away hay in the top of father's barn, where the thermometer must have been up to one hundred degrees or more and the temperature increased with every forkful just brought in from the field; it was difficult for me to understand why I was having a share in the most useful employment of man, when I was hoeing corn or potatoes or driving the cows to pasture.

I used to see Hon. Ralph D. Smith, the village

squire, after he had plead a case in court, playing croquet on the green in front of his house; the practice of law seemed to me a very noble occupation.

I used to call, occasionally, at the parsonage of the old north church—this was after I had become a member—and find the pastor resting in the early evening after he had preached two sermons on Sunday, conducted a funeral and married a couple on Monday, visited several houses where there was sickness on Tuesday and by that time had his two sermons for the following Sunday well under way; I used to think that the ministry was a very honorable calling.

I used to see Dr. Talcott hurrying past the house with his little medicine chest in his hand, slightly stooping, his eyes cast upon the path which he was following, as he went from house to house where there was sickness; it seemed to me that the occupation of a doctor was exceedingly useful.

Of course I am older now than I was then and I have not much of a quarrel with the immortal Washington; but I am glad that he stopped where he did in the use of adjectives. If after using the words "Noble," "Healthful," "Useful," he had gone a step further and said "most remunerative," I think I would have discredited even the story of the cherry tree and the hatchet.

And Benjamin Franklin,—the immortal Ben—is credited, I believe, with making a statement which I may have questioned at some time in my life which I do not doubt now. Was it not Franklin who said:

"He that by the plough would thrive, himself must either hold or drive."

In the summer of 1917, urged on by the growing hunger of this old world, I came upon the hill at Applehurst, bought a pair of horses and equipment and set about farming. Some days I held the plough and on other occasions I drove while someone else held the plough; but I also had with me a young man in his teens, who was in the field at seven o'clock in the morning and remained until twelve, out again at one o'clock to remain until five thirty. That year I lost only two hundred dollars in my farming operations.

The next year I neither held plough nor drove and lost four hundred dollars. The third year I fell behind approximately eight hundred dollars. Do you see how it works? A loss in 1917; that loss doubled in 1918; and that loss doubled in 1919.

I suppose you are familiar with the story of the man who wanted his horse shod. The blacksmith told him he would shoe his horse for him if he could make his own terms. The terms were one cent for the first nail driven, two cents for the second, four for the third, eight for the fourth and so on until the thirty-two nails had been driven. The story used to run that the man accepted the proposition but was never able to meet the obligation. He found to his chagrin that the shoeing of the horse was costing him \$21,114,036.48. When I coupled that story up with the mathematical progression of my own account on the wrong side,—I confess it made me a bit nervous.

If I continue to farm twelve more years, making fifteen years in all, and if each year the loss is double the loss of the previous year, the fifteenth summer of

my agricultural pursuit will require \$6,553,600.00 to meet the deficit. I am inclined to think that I better stop before long; if I keep it up only seven years longer and maintain the same progression it will require \$25,600.00 to meet that year's deficit. I am pondering this thing at the present time and when I reach the decision I will write you again.

Speaking of noble, honorable and useful employments, I wonder if you can tell me why the most noble, honorable and useful of them all, according to George Washington, should be the butt of ridicule of people who are absolutely dependent upon farmers.

I do not see the "*Agriculturist*" in these days but I do see each week an agricultural publication now in its eighty-fifth year; I do not often see a copy of it, however, without from one to a dozen caricatures of the very people for whom it is published.

I have looked over religious magazines and publications and periodicals for the benefit of the clergy but I do not find clergymen ridiculed therein; I have studied scientific publications more or less but I do not know any scientific publication that makes a business of holding scientists up to ridicule; I have looked over various publications devoted to medicine, but, for some reason, no attempt is ever made to give the impression that, after all, doctors are a ludicrous lot.

Why should the word "farmer" so often, not always—but most always—be preceeded by the word "old?" As I travel on trains I often hear such remarks as:

"An old farmer came to my door," "On my way

here I passed an old farmer on the road," and "About sunset you will see the old farmers going up and down the road taking an evening spin after their day's work."

I received a letter this morning from a man who has always been a successful farmer; he is respected and loved by all who know him, for his nobility of manhood, his honorable character and his very useful life. I knew him when he was seventeen years old and he announced, about that time, that he had decided what his life work would be—he would be an "old farmer."

He could not have gathered that idea of farming in the agricultural community where he had been brought up but he did get the idea somewhere that, although he was a man adapted to the work of the farmer and was in that employment because he loved it, it was an occupation that few people regarded as honorable or noble;—"an old farmer," "a hayseed,"—and yet through all time, caricaturists, pigmies, and the thoughtless have depended and must continue to depend on the farm for life.

Rev. Henry Ward Beecher used to say, at the end of a railroad journey, he always felt as though he ought to go to the head of the train and shake hands with the engineer and fireman, the two men who had brought him safely to his journey's end.

Why should not our hat come off to the men who have brought us safely through another winter, supplying our table with fruits and vegetables, flour and cereals only to eternally be held up to ridicule?

And after all it is my judgment that the New England farmer is to be congratulated. George

Washington and Benjamin Franklin are not the only men who have said wise things. There was a man who lived and wrote long before either one of them was born, and, perhaps his wisdom was equal to either Washington's or Franklin's.

Agur said: "Give me neither poverty nor riches."

I suppose if he were living now and wished to express the same idea he would say:

"Let me be neither pauper nor millionaire".

There may be here and there a millionaire, who is famous, who is at second hand an agriculturist, who has made his money in the city and is spending it in the country, just as a farmer makes it in the country and spends it in the city—but the New England farmer, if he tends to business—if he either holds or drives—will never know the grind of abject poverty nor will he ever be a millionaire.

Somewhere between the two he will land, and Agur, when he uttered those words, was wishing for himself the most satisfactory condition possible—the middle of the road.

I am told that when the census taker called at my house this winter he got somewhat mixed up. As you know I have been an ordained minister for forty years, have preached nearly every Sunday; I have for thirty years been Supervisor of the work of the Good Will Homes at Hinckley, Maine; for about thirty-three years editor of the *Good Will Record* and I have had various other interests. But the census taker admitted he did not know where I belonged and so, as I own a farm he would enter me as a farmer. I can not believe he put the disrespectful adjective "old" before it but bear in mind whether

I have courage to keep up this experiment or not, I have got a deal of enjoyment out of my experiences of the past three years.

If you hear I am not farming—that I have bought no fertilizer and that I am curtailing expenses in every direction, do not be disturbed; if you will come up this summer I hope to show you a garden free of weeds and reasonably successful and I will take you out and show you my little merino lamb born in January and another one in February and another in March, though I was to have had no lambs on the farm at Applehurst until April. I will show you where my guinea hen will have stolen her nest, and you shall watch the humming birds, near sunset, as they hum amongst the gladioli and nasturtiums.

If you want to you may ride on old Billy's back—Billy is my merino ram—but I do not know as you will care to do that for the only way you can get off is to slip off and woolen pants do not slip easily from wool though you will go like the wind until Billy unloads you.

Cordially yours,

P. S. After writing the above I received a copy of a religious weekly of very large circulation. One writer discusses some famous personalities—"men who loomed big in building up" that publication. He says of one man:

"One of this type is a retired business man, who, now well up in years, devotes practically his entire income to good work done in secret. It not only

keeps him busy, but wonderfully well and happy. He privately finances several missionaries in the foreign field, and keeps in frequent touch with them by mail, cheering and encouraging them in their work. He is also the financial mainstay, if not the sole support of a number of poor invalids and shut-ins, and finds immense satisfaction in this humble and unheralded service."

Please note that this retired business man is now "well up in years."

Then the writer says:

"Another of the same sort was a lumber merchant on the Great Lakes, who gave liberally in secret to various worthy charities. He did not permit his name to be known, and even forbade the printing of his initials in any publication. His account with his Divine Partner was conducted on a liberal basis, and he invariably exceeded the tenth. It was the joy of his life to keep it in full operation and I know that he felt it to be a source of blessing."

Then this writer has occasion to mention a farmer, and says of him:

"He helped the church, the schools, the poor and unfortunate, and foreign missions were never forgotten. I can recall some of his lists which included substantial gifts to missions in foreign lands. He and his wife found the greatest satisfaction in keeping all investments of this kind a sort of hidden partnership, the details of which were given to no living person. Even the beneficiaries were not permitted to know the name of their benefactor, although many a humble preacher at home or struggling missionary abroad, thanked God for his un-

known friend and invoked blessings upon him. My old farmer is now resting from his earthly labors these many years; but I have always been glad that it was my good fortune to know one who, though unlearned in the world's estimation, was skilled in the art of laying up heavenly riches by making such excellent use of his opportunities on earth. My old Western farmer was a faithful steward."

Why reserve the adjective "old" for the farmer and why use it twice in one paragraph, when the last sentence would read much smoother with "old" left out? Why not say "old" business man, and "old" lumber merchant?

LETTER XXIII

Dear Mr. L—

I suppose you are familiar with the expression so often used on farms—"between hay and grass," and in justice, this letter ought to be so dated.

The family, which through the winter months occupied a part of this house, has moved to Clover-Slope—just across the circle, and the family which is to abide here through the summer will not arrive until about June first. So I have the freedom of the house, cooking my meals on the kitchen stove, or, if begrudging the time required to start a fire, falling back on my "Theros Mess Kit" and fuel cubes.

I am feeding the last of my hay to horses and young stock, while the sheep and lambs are already nibbling grass in the orchard—old "Billy" jumping the fences several times a day in search of sweeter pastures, and the youngest lamb straying away from his mother and rushing about frantically calling for his ma. You will note that I say "his" mother; nearly all my lambs this season require the use of the pronoun "his" rather than "her", and so I will have some lamb chops later in the season.

Recently I had a distinguished guest to dinner—a man high up in theological and educational circles. One day the mail brought me a note reading as follows:

"Dear George:—

This is to inform and forewarn you that some day

this week I purpose to take a loaf of bread, at least two cans of Eastport's best sardines, a lemon and—and—and—something else that is sweet, leave the train at Good Will Farm, take a bee line for Applehurst, where I shall expect to be received with such honors as the place affords, including an address of welcome by your distinguished self (Hebrew language preferred though Greek will do) to which I shall be prepared to make fitting response either in poetry or prose—possibly *blank* verse. How would Thursday (29) do?

Yours, _____,"

I read it with unalloyed pleasure, and the next day notified my prospective guest that Thursday the twenty-ninth was just the time; that I was delighted to know that he was coming; that he need bring no provisions unless he much preferred to do so, as I had plenty, and that the formal address of welcome was already prepared.

I had no anxiety about the lunch—that was easy. But the address of welcome was quite another proposition. I had never studied Hebrew, and knew but one word of that language, and frankly, I was not very sure of that one. I had forgotten my Greek entirely, and Greek greetings were out of the question; but it was still possible to get up a classic welcome that would fit the occasion and meet the requirements of my coming guest.

I would greet him in Latin, and he could make his response in Greek or Hebrew, as he chose, and thus the occasion would have a classic dignity quite unusual up here on the hill.

But at the present time there are only twenty-eight books in this house—twenty-six if I exclude a seed catalogue and the Gospel of St. John, both in paper covers.

With such a paucity of cloth bound volumes, one would not expect to find a Latin lexicon in the house, and there is none here; and so, *miserabile dictu*, I had to depend entirely upon memory.

It seemed fitting that I should address him as a brother, and so I decided on “O fratre mihi”—“Oh, brother to me.” I recalled that the first Latin verb I learned to conjugate was “amo” “to love”; a few selections from “Amo” would be appropriate, I felt confident. But more vivid than “amo” in my recollection were the first words of Virgil’s *Æneid*—“I sing of arms and the hero,” and so I decided on “Arma virumque cano” as a phrase that I could wisely utilize. Then there was “Tempus fugit” which an uncultured father told his inquiring son meant something about fly time; there was our national motto which would give my address a patriotic air, as my guest is a patriot, and these words together with a “Haec fabula docet” indelibly impressed upon my memory and Caesar’s triumphant and immortal words would be sufficient, though I finally decided to inject “Ipse dixit”—“he said it.”

The address then, when completed would read as follows:

“O, fratre mihi; Amo amas, amat, amamus, amatis, amant, arma virumque cano, e pluribus unum, tempus fugit, haec fabula docet, ipse dixit, veni, vidi, vici.”

I am not sure that you ever studied Latin, and so I will explain that my effort translates thus:

“Oh, brother to me; I love, you love, he, she or it loves, we love, you love, they love; I sing of arms and the hero, one formed of many, time flies, this fable teaches, he said, I came, I saw, I conquered.”

Put into English, it sounds inane, I admit; but my coming guest had requested a classic, formal greeting, and with limited facilities and brief time for preparation, what else could I do?

On the morning of the twenty-ninth I went over the trail from Applehurst to Good Will and stopped at the office in the Prescott Building; my son went to the station to meet my guest and escort him to the office. I watched the 10:45 train as it stopped and then moved on; I saw the two men meet and walk together toward the building, and when near enough, so that the ceremonies could be carried out with dignity, I walked down the path. At the proper moment I halted and addressed the newly arrived guest:

“O, fratre mihi” and the rest of it.

As soon as I began to speak, my guest looked scared; he cast an inquiring, appealing glance at my son, who smiled but said nothing; he looked again at me, and then for an instant to the ground and then off to the hills.

“Does your father—is this the usual—” he began, apparently embarrassed.

But I interrupted him, and I think relieved him by saying:

“Not being familiar with the Hebrew, and having forgotten Greek, I *had* to fall back on Latin; this is

the formal address you requested. Where's your response? You haven't any."

"I believe that I said that my response would be or might be in poetry or *blank* verse—I—I think it's *blank*," he replied.

The formalities being over, we had a royal good time. My daughters came up early in the day, as they said "to set things to rights" and when they left, before my guest and I arrived, they had set the table in a most tidy, attractive fashion in the dining room. When I am here alone, I eat either in the kitchen or the parlor.

Once while we were lunching, my guest said:

"Oh, isn't this fine! I knew as soon as I arrived that a woman had been in the house."

Oh woman kind, thy name is home-creator; not home-maker, or home-builder, for those who make or build use material, but out of nothing thou canst create a home-atmosphere. What can mankind do without thee?

Those daughters were up here less than two hours—they found a house; they left a home. It is only four days since they were here, and the place has degenerated into just a house again; anyone who enters here today will know, soon as the threshold is crossed that a man lives here alone. Everybody understands. Even a fourteen year old boy came up here the other day; it was raining, and I had been picking over beans for planting; into one dish I was putting the seed beans; into another I was putting beans not quite right for planting, but too good to throw away; I was throwing discolored or broken beans and chaff on the floor to be swept up soon as I

was through. I asked the boy in, and the floor was so covered with chaff, bits of bean pods, moulded beans and the like that I thought I must explain to the boy that it was because I was sorting beans that the place looked so neglected and the floor so disreputable. So I said unto the lad:

"I suppose you understand why this room looks as it does."

"Oh, yes," replied the lad with a knowing and sympathetic smile, "you are living up here all alone."

Well, the loaf of bread was cut, the cans of sardines were opened, the bacon and eggs were fried, the postum was boiled, the preserved fruit was portioned out—a second helping of each, thank you—and finally the sweets were passed. We talked of agriculture and the effect of farming on the nervous system; we discussed the high cost of living, the Inter-Church drive then in progress; we compared views on premillenianism, spiritualism and other doctrines; we failed to get up an argument on any subject; the time passed too quickly and we said "good bye" in the mother tongue.

In the future, I expect to greet my friends in plain English, the formal expression of greeting having been such a failure, but I have a Latin address as classic as the day is long, all ready in case of emergency, *O fratre mihi*.

But I'm still "between hay and grass." As I have said one family has gone to make way for the regular summer occupants, but the occupants have not come; the cows are in the barn, the sheep nibbling grass. Besides this there are other signs that it is

neither winter nor summer. For instance, crows, robins, blue-birds, meadow-larks, juncos, grackles, yellow-hammers, sparrows, black-birds, tree swallows and the hermit thrush are here, but the orioles, bobolinks and other feathered friends delay their coming. I have set out a hundred little lilacs, planted peas, sowed onions, sprayed the orchard and raked the lawn, but no work can yet be done in the fields, and so, "between hay and grass" I write to you.

Cor-dially yours,

P. S. I am inclined—yes, I am persuaded—that my guest enjoyed the occasion as much, or almost as much as I did because, since writing the above I have received a letter from him. He has apparently forgotten how he fell down on the formalities, and it is well that he should; I don't know just how to interpret his reference to the liquid refreshment which flowed so freely at our feast for he pronounces it "perfect" of the kind but it sounds to me as though he was not quite satisfied with the kind. But I'm sure the letter will make you want to come up and see me and so I enclose it.

"My dear George:—

I would not under any consideration fail to observe all the proprieties that should obtain in connection with the recent exclusive social function at Applehurst. I write to say that in my opinion no more delicious bacon was ever served in the Kennebec Valley. The quality of the turnip cannot be surpassed. The eggs gave every indication that the hens producing them are not allowed to partake of

food of inferior quality. And the postum, what shall I say of the postum? Indeed, nothing need be said, other than this—it was perfect postum.

Of course under the circumstances I cannot speak of the sardines and the bread. But I wish to affirm that to my mind the table decorations were distinctly suitable in every way satisfactory, not to say beautiful. In fact the whole occasion was characterized by a simplicity and richness that made the event outstanding in the annals of Good Will and its environments—or words to that effect.

I am writing hurriedly as I am about to take a train for Boston. Otherwise I should amplify more freely in touching upon these incidents of so much interest. With true affection, your friend of earlier and later years.”

LETTER XXIV

Dear Mr. L.—

You told me, the last time I saw you, that you could reveal some things about farming, the revelations to be based on your actual experiences a few years ago when you left the office and became an agriculturist. But there was not time that day, and so I am yet in the dark; but I infer that, having devoted several years to farming, you can sympathize with me, in any and all of my experiences up here on the hill. There are people, however, who claim that a person cannot *fully* sympathize with another unless he has passed through exactly the same experience. And so I'm wondering if you kept sheep. If you did you will understand and sympathize to the fullest extent; if not—well, if you have never kept sheep then you know only in part.

Last night my sheep came home, as the old rhyme has it, "bringing their tails behind them." They arrived just after midnight. I had placed them in a rented pasture some distance away and there was no sense in their coming back as they did. When they arrived they found that the orchard where they had browsed all through the spring had been ploughed. so they gained nothing by their return.

I suppose "Old Billy" happened to discover a weak place in the fence somewhere and came through, and in the most unreasoning, unreasonable and repre-

hensible manner, if one sheep goes anywhere the rest will follow.

I remember reading—perhaps you read the same item a few years ago—that men were driving a flock of about five thousand sheep through the mountains some where in the West; one sheep chanced to jump and disappear down the mountain in a deadly fall, and the rest followed until practically the entire flock had leaped to its death.

When my sheep came home I paid no attention to them; I laid under the light blanket and meditated on the general simplicity of the sheep family; but soon after daybreak they ceased to bleat and an idea occurred to me: “What if they had gone to my garden?” I arose, looked out of the window, and discovered that the sudden quiet of the flock was due, in part at least, to the fact that some of the sheep had discovered the two long rows of peas—the peas that were up the highest and growing the most luxuriantly. There was an abundance of tender grass; there was plenty of sweet, tender clover; but all these must be ignored if there was a chance to tackle the choicest corner of my vegetables; and these wooly idiots were doing their best to write the word failure on my garden for the year 1920.

Would you think that was enough? No; I allowed the whole flock to loaf around the house for several hours. I had planned to plant two rows of a choice variety of potatoes that day—through the middle of the garden. I carried a bag of fertilizer and the basket of seed potatoes, carefully cut, out to the end of the plat and began to open the hills with a hoe. I had opened forty or fifty hills, when I happened to

look back of me, and there was "old Billy" with his head in the seed basket. He was munching my seed potatoes—seed potatoes at \$6.50 per bushel. Why I could lunch the adled-pated brute in a Pullman Dining Car, *a la carte* and the whole meal, including a generous tip to George wouldn't cost what those potatoes had cost me. So I sailed down the slope toward Billy and the basket trying to convince him that he was costing me more than he was worth.

Just another word about "Billy" my merino ram. Last summer he was a bit unreliable and it was understood that it was better not to go into the orchard without some means of protection. But this spring he was kind and gentlemanly; I walked past him two or three days in succession after he had begun to jump the fence, and as soon as he saw me approaching he would look for a place to jump the fence into the orchard again.

So it came to be understood that Billy was harmless—as harmless as a lamb—and so he was allowed to nip the choicest clumps of grass he could find anywhere, and these clumps were all out of the regular pasture in the orchard. It came about eventually that I paid no attention to him; this seemed to be satisfactory to him and it was eminently so to me.

But one Sunday morning in May—it was a bright morning—Billy had left all his wives and offspring in the orchard to pick up what they could and he was revelling in the tender grass on the lawn near the house.

A happy thought occurred to me. Why not show Billy a kindness? I knew he was fond of sliced ruta-baga and preferred it even to the best and ten-

derest lawn grass; sliced ruta-baga was peaches and cream for Billy. So I prepared a handful and went out; I held out my hand to indicate that I had something good to eat. Billy moved toward me in an inquiring attitude. When he was about six feet from me, not being sure whether he—the dear creature—would, lamb like, eat out of my hand, I threw the succulent chips to the ground in front of him. Billy immediately began to sample them, and suddenly, with his mouth full of my bounty—raised himself on his hind legs, lowered his head and started for me. Zip! The veranda was close at hand; mine was inglorious retreat.

There are rams and there are dogs. A dog will lick the hand that beats him; a ram will knock down the man that feeds him and then butt the life out of him if he has the chance.

Two or three times this spring I have been about ready to sell my flock. I didn't like the attitude of "Old Billy"; two or three of the ewes were specially aggravating, and the lambs showed a disrespect that was reprehensible to say the least. Whenever the whole flock scaled the fence and came out of the orchard, of course the lambs were with their mothers. But when I would rush out of the house, gesticulate wildly, or shout at the top of my voice to the flock, every last one would scale the fence again—and the lambs—six of them would get together regardless of the whereabouts of their mothers and go galloping through the orchard, away from me, and when they were in the air, all four feet free from the ground, they would give their bodies a ludicrous twist or wiggle, then striking the ground they would

bound into the air and go through the same twisting, wiggling performance again. The sight of the little scamps celebrating their escape was usually too much for me; it always evoked my risibilities and I would forgive them.

You ask why I persist in keeping them. I will tell you; it's a sense of duty. I must do my part toward clothing the people in this great country. As I write this I am wearing a suit of clothes. This is the third time it has been worn. It was worn first by sheep—sheep like those of which I am writing. Then the wool was carded, spun and woven; about six years ago it was made into a suit of clothes and worn several months. Then it went to the rag-man, thence to the shoddy-mill, and now I am wearing it. I paid three times what the suit would have cost six years ago. You say: "Yes, but you get enough for your wool so you can afford to pay three times as much for what you purchase. Listen. A year ago wool was seventy-two cents a pound; this year it brings the farmer thirty cents if he can sell it at all. So I'm wondering if you ever kept sheep. If you did then you know and can sympathize.

Cordially yours,

LETTER XXV

Dear Friend:—

I am going to confide in you. This does not mean that I am going to tell you a secret, a bit of choice and perhaps damning gossip and then ask you never to tell; it only means that, with a confidential air, as friend to friend, I am going to say something to you—you, so far away and in environment so unlike mine—and then you may do as you choose; you may keep the statement as a profound secret or you may tell your wife and enjoin her not to tell; yea, she may tell her most confidential friend and bind her to the greatest secrecy; or if you choose you may post the statement on a bulletin board in the post office.

Now I must say that when I sat down and wrote the first words of this epistle—"My Dear Friend" I had no intention of referring to your good wife and her feminine friends as I have; in fact I am not responsible for the idea herein expressed. But just as I was thinking of this idea of privacy, this "don't you ever tell any one" habit of some people and the mischief done by it, I recalled what is said of Gilbert Stuart the painter whose unfinished portrait of Washington is so familiar to you. It is related that Stuart would sometimes say:

"Suppose you know something that no one else knows. How many know it?

Of course the reply would be "One—only one."

"That is true" Stuart would say, "put down a I"

“and now suppose you tell your wife and instruct her never to tell it to a living soul; how many will know it now?”

“Two” would be the reply. “Very good” the painter would rejoin, “put down two thus II.”

“And now” he would continue “suppose your wife tells it to her most confidential friend and cautions her never to breathe a word of it to any one; how many will know it now?”

“Three” some one would reply and Stuart would say “put a one beside the other two.”

Some one would put down the third unit so it would look like this,—III; then Stuart would exclaim:

“That is not three, my friend, that is one hundred and eleven.”

Please pardon this degression and this waste of my paper and your time; also this unsanctified fling at the gentler side of the now fully suffraged family—it is not *my* fling and I disclaim all credit for it and all responsibility for it as well.

The fact which I am going to entrust to you while I am in a confidential mood is this: “In my own best judgment I am not a successful farmer.”

Perhaps you have suspected this; mayhap you have been expecting such an admission from me; it is quite thinkable that you may have expressed your own opinion of my efforts along agricultural lines in complete harmony with my now settled convictions.

But this does not mean that there are no successful farmers; I think there are many of them, but no man with the restriction and limitations from which

I suffer—no, I mean by which I am hindered—can succeed.

In the first place I hire a young man to do the work; he in turn has to occasionally hire a man to help him because single-handed farming is a vexation of spirit and almost impossible. Last summer I did not hold plow or cultivator; nor did I go into the hay field once nor touch the wheat and oats in harvest time. It is true that I had a garden with rows more than three hundred feet long—rows of carrots, onions, parsnips, beets, sweet corn, string beans and cucumbers and when I did anything these log rows required my attention. If I could have done all the work on the farm myself I would have saved the expense of labor, and my account book would look different on the balance page; but the man—a born farmer, with farmer instincts, and farmer sense and farmer gumption—had to be paid and I was glad to pay him for he deserved it, but, alas, for the profit side of the account.

But I have had other difficulties and hindrances which the average farmer does not experience. For instance, in July—right in the midst of things—I went off to Lake George, New York State, and was gone two weeks. My young farmer kept up his end but I stipulated that he should not work in the garden; so while I was gone the weeds and grass among those long rows struck a 2:10 gait; it was nip and tuck between vegetables and nuisances and had I not returned when I did and called a halt the nuisances in the form of witch-grass, pig weeds and wild mustard would have won out against beets, onions, carrots and the rest of my garden family. I had to call

in outside aid, in shape of Good Will boys to suppress the riot in those long rows and this resulted in a further shrinking of my purse, and an ungainly row of figures on the expense side of my account.

This is not all. I had in my plans a bit of stone work where the "Bowdoin Trail" through the Good Will woods comes out on my farm, and ends on the east slope of the hill. There were stone to be hauled for this purpose, and sand and cement. I used to encourage my man to desert the real farming on all sorts of pretences—wet soil, damp weather, threatened rain and the like—to do things for this "End of the Trail" monument. The monument stands there and I am glad but it is not a profitable venture from a farmer's standpoint: there's no money in it and it hindered more or less.

There was still another hindrance almost as potent as purslane and witch grass in a garden and it, too, was profitless; I refer to my ambition to build a road from this house through the back lot, over the hill, down to Good Will Farm. I began to build this and I would say to my man:

"Now, of course, I don't expect you to neglect the farm but whenever its too wet for the regular farm work or it looks like rain, or is misty or—well, whenever you *can* work on the road I'll be glad." And, inasmuch as he has a constructive instinct, he was as ready for road work as I was anxious he should work there; and while a man works on the road, in any sense of the word, the weeds will grow; and if you have the man on "off jobs" when farm work should be done, it is not his fault, but it reduces profit.

But, alas, there is still more to be said. I was troubled more or less with ideas; these ideas had to receive attention or they would be lost to me forever, and though the loss would not appear on the farm account, it would be none the less serious to me. Sometimes it would be an idea for a sermon to the Good Will boys and girls on a Sunday afternoon in the fall, and I would have to go to the house and look up the text and be sure of it, or to put the skeleton of the discourse on paper; or I would get an idea that I could put a better bend in the road I was building through the woods or that some trees ought to be planted near the stone monument and I would leave the legitimate work of farm or garden to attend to these things which show no profit on the account books but which interest me. All these non-farming ideas hindered me more or less. I don't know whether my neighbors understood how I was hampered in my garden and farming by them or not; but one day I was sitting quietly in the woods—a breathless day, not a leaf moving—when a chickadee perched on a twig directly in front of me and cocking his head on one side, he said:

“What's the idee? What's the idee-dee-dee? What's the idee?”

My trouble with ideas seemed to be spread to feathered creatures.

But I have well defined plans for the top of the hill; the stone monument is completed and the road through the woods will be in time—no profit but lots of pleasure.

Then to clap the climax I was in the garden the other day and the idea of a poem to be read at the

Grange struck me; it was a feeble idea but I had to attend to it then or not at all. So the weeds prospered and the garden suffered for lack of a dust mulch while I went to the house and wrote some "lines"—not a Bryant's "Thanatopsis" not a Longfellow's "Morituri Salutamus" nor a Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Church Yard." Alas, no; just a few lines on early cucumber planting, but I have already read them at the Grange and got them off my mind. They are as follows:

One day I planted some cucumber seed—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

I planted enough to meet my need,
Enough and to spare is my garden creed—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

The short nights were warm, the long days bright—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

The seedlings were really a beautiful sight,
In planting so early I thought I was right—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

One day there came down a quiet rain—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

It gently watered the newly sown grain,
That day I could see my cucumbers gain—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

A evening wind came out of the west—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

It fled before a most unwelcome guest,
At day-break I started out in a quest—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

In quest of cucumber vines I went,
There were signs that my time had been misspent
As over the frost-bitten leaves I bent—
A frost will kill cucumbers—

I hoped ahead of my neighbors to get,
And some of my neighbors wanted to bet
On a killing frost preceeded by wet,

And said that rash planting I would regret;
But on early "cukes" my heart was set
And so for myself I had spread the net,
But a frost will kill cucumbers.

Think of a man neglecting a chance to have the banner garden of his section of the town to "jot down" such stuff. There is no profit in such works; they are vanity—*vanity*—VANITY.

But, my friend, listen to me while I make further statement. It is this: While I am not a successful farmer, my farming here on the hill is successful; it is successful because it brings me in touch with the soil—with Mother Earth.

Sometimes I wonder that we—"of the earth, earthly" live as long as we do. We sleep on the second or third or tenth floor above the earth's surface; we walk on concrete pavements; we ride over tarvia roads. We ignore instinctive demands; we do this deliberately, continually and to our own disadvantage, and then we wonder what ails us.

Do you remember the day I told you about by oldest son when he was two or three years old; how there was an English ivy vine growing in an earthen crock which stood on the floor; how the little fellow would waddle to it and, when no one was looking, would take the soil from the crock and put it in his mouth and then get his hands patted for soiling his white pinafore and also for doing such a naughty thing as stealing the soil from the English ivy; how the little fellow began to blanch until he was waxen white, and became too feeble to walk any more and could not even stand on his feet; how for three nights he neither slept nor retained the most deli-

cately prepared foods; how the doctor came and left medicines and the child grew worse and we changed doctors and the new doctor left white powders folded in white paper and assured us that when we had administered two of them that the little patient would surely sleep; how the powders failed to work as predicted and we rushed to the country and into a vacant cottage and let the child lie or sit on the lawn and how he pushed his little fingers, pale and slender, into the clipped grass and dug up the soil and put it between his white lips and gulped it down; how I scolded and plead with the mother not to allow him to do it and she exclaimed that she was doing her best to keep him from doing such a thing—for it stood to reason that a child whose stomach could not retain the most delicate foods could not digest gravel or garden soil; how, finally, it occurred to me that though he had done this fool-hardy thing several times the soil had not killed him, and he was already gaining ground—gaining ground in more senses than one; how the child lived and grew to manhood and is more than two hundred pounds, avoirdupois?

Do you remember it? Well, that was a child's instinct; and the instinct triumphed over the knowledge and wisdom of parents and the skill of physicians.

Do you remember that sixty years ago, when we were little chaps we used to go in swimming, and then, coming out of the water we would smear our bodies with mud and lie around in it, and glory in it, and then, rather reluctantly dive and part with the coating of sticky soil? Thirty years ago I was amused and interested to note that boys were doing

the same thing; yesterday—sixty years after you and I used to do it,—boys were still doing it—I saw them. “A foolish boyish trick” you say? I say “instinct.”

More than one winter I have, after being housed on floors and pavements, and cut off from mother earth with rubber overshoes, looked out of the window and said:

“How I’d like to go where the soil is warm and moist and lay aside my toggery and lie down in a newly opened furrow and roll over in the soil.”

Instinct; just natural instinct, and I have always noticed that the nearer I came to doing that thing the sooner I recovered from the winter isolation from the soil.

That’s why I came up on the hill again this spring. I didn’t winter well; I was cut off from the soil by rubber soles, pavements, concrete, wooden floors. It was absolutely necessary that I get back—not necessarily to real farm work but to the soil—and I did it. I didn’t disport myself in newly turned furrows, but weeding onions, carrots, beets, parsnips—the rows three hundred feet long,—with my toes and my knees on the soil and one hand resting on the soil while I picked the weeds out of the row with the other came near enough to it to answer all purposes. So my farming has been a success; I feel as strong as I did thirty years ago and that wretched attack of the “flu” with the relapse and the feeling for days that I had got near the end and preached my last sermon is almost forgotten; any way it was just an incident in life.

There is room in my barns for more hay; there

will be room in my cellars for more vegetables than I have raised; the expenses have left room in my purse for money that will not come from the sale of products enough to fill it; but, with it all, there's got to be room for me in this world for a time longer.

No; I'm not a successful farmer; but my farming this season has been crowned with success. I'll write again.

Affectionately yours,

LETTER XXVI

Dear Friend—

I feel constrained to write to you this morning, and yet I have no report on farming to make; I have not, up to the present, made any profits nor have my losses been exorbitant; wool is still twenty-five cents a pound with no sale for it at that price. I am told I can now buy as good a suit as the one I have on when it was new, three years ago, for seventy-five dollars, but I am not anxious to exchange three hundred pounds of wool for one suit of clothes. I have two or three cows ready for the slaughter, and a cow's hide now brings about three dollars and a half; I am told I can get a pair of shoes such as I am wearing—what there is left of them—for eleven dollars, but I'm not anxious to exchange three hides for one pair of shoes for my feet. The explanation of the discrepancy between raw and finished products is the word "re-adjustment"; that is, I am told that we are now in the process of readjustment, which means something akin to bankruptcy for me, if I have to sell things produced on this year's costs at adjusted prices. But I am not lying awake nights. You have heard of the man who was kept awake one night into the wee-small hours by a man who was pacing back and forth, in the room above him, and whose footsteps were heavy. The disturbed man finally became desperate and went up to the room

above and begged the restless tenant to go to bed and to sleep.

"I can't" said the excited occupant of the room "I have a note for five thousand dollars coming due tomorrow noon and I haven't a dollar with which to pay it".

"Well, go to bed and go to sleep; it's the time for the holder of the note to be anxious. Go to bed" was the irritated man's reply.

Whether my creditors have yet got anxious I do not know, but as for myself I retire early and sleep well. "God bless the man who first invented sleep."

But I am going to write you because I have had another caller—a boy and he has greatly interested me.

This boy, Ephraim came to me yesterday afternoon out in the woods and said:

"Are you going to be at Applehurst this evening?"

I told him I expected to be, and he expressed a wish that he might come up.

"Come by all means," I said.

When Ephraim arrived I was in the kitchen with a fire in the cook stove; I had left the fire-place to itself all day because my supply of wood was getting low, and with the fall plowing not yet finished, Leslie is not ready to replenish my woodshed.

There are two things I can say about that boy, Ephraim: First, he is like every other boy I have ever known; second, he is unlike any other boy I have ever met. Do you understand?

Ephraim knocked at the back door, and I greeted him there. As he came into the kitchen he was a picture for an artist. He stood for a moment, cap

in hand, his light wavy hair pushed back in a fluffy cloud, above a singularly fine forehead; the flush of abounding health on his cheeks; his eyes aflame with life; a smile quivering about his finely chiseled lips; his nostrils dilated as he still breathed quickly and deeply because of his swift walk up the hill in the storm; a few flakes of damp snow on his shoulders, adding a depth to the slight touches of red woven into his heavy mackintosh. He was not wet but just damp from head to foot—dampness from the incipient snow storm that gave the youth an atmosphere of freshness, purity, wholesomeness that was inspiring. Our country can never lose its prestige; her glory will never fade; the strength of American manhood can never wane as long as we can have enough youths like him.

There are two types of youth—the Apollo type, and the Hercules type. Ephraim belongs to the former; there is no suggestion in his form of great physical strength—nothing massive, nor is there the promise of ponderous proportions in his future development; he is tall and slender in form—perhaps beyond the average; his finely cut features tell of innate tendencies toward the best things.

“It snows” said Ephraim as the quivering smile I have mentioned, broke in to something akin to a laugh.

“I see, boy” was my reply, “and it’s a damp snow; take off that mackintosh and put it here near the stove; welcome to the kitchen; it will take too long now to get the other room warm from the fireplace.”

“I like a kitchen” said Ephraim, in approval of my choice for the evening.

“Another thing” I continued, “you took a long walk this afternoon and while this is no time for a meal—it’s neither breakfast time, dinner time, nor supper time,—I’m hungry, Eph, and I’m quite sure you can eat. Here’s a half a loaf of bread; its been in this cupboard four days already. With this knife I cut off the slices, so” and one slice after another separated from the loaf as the knife cleaved its way, and the slices fell over on the bread board.

“These I’m going to toast with this toaster” and I adjusted the freshly cut slices of stale bread for the process.

“While the bread is toasting we will get the other things ready” I went on, while Ephraim occasionally uttered some comment.

Finally we sat down to the simple repast of buttered toast and honey, and the last melon of my 1920 harvest.

“Here’s honey, Eph, if you like it,” I said, “help yourself.”

The youth reached out for the box of honey-comb, and as he held it in one hand, a silver spoon in the other, he paused—paused as though some apparition had startled him.

“My mother loved honey,” he said.

There was a silence; a silence unbroken save for the singing of the tea-kettle on the back of the stove, and a blast of wind from the northeast against the window.

Then he repeated the words: “My mother loved honey.”

He turned his face toward mine, a face that now

seemed deathly white in the dull lamp-light and added:

“She just *loved* it and on her birthdays I used to go out and buy a little box of it like this—perhaps two boxes. Mother said—she used to say she had rather have it on her birthday than something that cost more money.”

Then I understood. I understood why he had paused and his face had seemed to blanch, and why he had spoken in such subdued, tender tones. A home—a home with mother in it; a grave in Greenwood cemetery; but between his early days in the home and the opening of the sepulchre, pleasant memories, fond recollections to be cherished for a lifetime.

As the anniversary of mother’s birthday approached the lad had gone into the market to search for something that would please her; it must be a token of pure affection; it must be an expenditure that would meet her approval; it ought to be something the giving of which would be gladly remembered by the giver.

There were rubies and opals in the market. Why not have a coronet made, set with opals and rubies, and place it on mother’s queenly head? No?

There were diamonds in the market. Why not purchase a gold ring, solid and heavy, inlaid with diamonds that would flash in her eyes, and place it on her finger in the early hours of her anniversary day? No?

There were dress goods of rare and beautiful patterns in the market. Why not select a silver-brocade and have a gown fashioned for mother, and let her

array herself in it, on the anniversary of her birth? No?

What is sweeter than honey in the honey-comb?

So the lad purchased a little box of it; then to emphasize his love he supplemented it with another box like it, and took the offering back from the market to home and mother.

I think the mother's affection for the boy was as sweet as the honey he bought her. I believe the boy's love for his mother was as pure as the contents of the honey-comb he placed before her; "mother loved honey—she just loved it and she had rather have it than something that cost more money"—rubies and opals, gold and diamonds—costly apparel.

A simple gift—a box of honey in the honey-comb—perhaps two boxes of it; but if love can glorify anything then the gift was glorified by the boy's love; and if appreciation can sanctify anything then the gift was sanctified by the mother's appreciation.

A long time ago there was a man; they called him the man of Galilee and he is called by that name to this day. It came to pass once that a woman brought a box of ointment; the box was of alabaster. She broke the box and annointed the feet of the "Man of Galilee" with the sweet-smelling contents. The men who saw it were indignant; they said "Nonsense; waste; extravagance!" But the Man of Galilee approved it; and the memory of the act, of its lessons and its blessed influence, has lived through the centuries, and it is still told of the woman that she did this thing. And if—But, here, here; I am already launching out, and this begins to sound like preaching while I only intended to write you a

friendly letter. I will close here and now, but before I do it, I must tell you that the boy Ephraim will never be the same boy to me that he was up to last evening. I had never before had the glimpse of his nature and its fineness, of his heart and its tenderness until we sat down to our little repast of toast and honey.

After this, whenever I meet the boy, I'm quite sure to see not only a boy—a youth of the Apollo type—but a little box of honey in the honey-comb, “perhaps two boxes.”

Cordially yours,

LETTER XXVII

Dear Friend:—

Here is more news for you. I have sold my sheep; you may not care whether I continue in the sheep business or not, but to me, personally, it is interesting. I will tell you about it.

I was loath to part with them; they always seemed so companionable, except "Old Billy," who had inherited a tendency to butt, when there was no call for butting. I disposed of him last fall, as you will remember. The Sunday papers have just announced that a man in Boston says that animals have souls, and that their souls go to heaven, but he never saw "Old Billy"; anyway he did not understand Billy's traits, or he would not talk in that way.

My sheep lingered about the house and up in the orchard this spring; they would occasionally come to the veranda on the north side of the house and attempt to look in at the windows, as if they were bursting with curiosity to see what manner of life I was living, and whether I ever dined on roast lamb or mutton chops; I could think of no other reason why they should be so inquisitive and so regardless of the ordinary courtesies of life; but I suppose all my neighbors are like sheep; they too, wonder whether I am a good housekeeper, and whether, when I am alone in the house, I say grace before meals, though they do not come onto the veranda to look in and see.

No; I did not want to part with them, but as the season advanced, they developed characteristics which made it necessary. I had no pasture for them; pasture was rented of a neighbor last year, but the neighbor sold his farm and I must needs make some other arrangement.

One Sunday morning I went into a big temple of worship in a great city, and was among the first to arrive. I took a front seat in the first balcony and could see the entire auditorium. A woman entered and started up the central aisle; as she did so, there was a great array of vacant seats—all to be filled with worshippers within twenty minutes, but vacant just then. She had her choice of all of them. If there had been but three sittings, she would have been satisfied with any one of them; but with so many to select from, she was hard to please. She looked about for a moment, went to within a few rows of the rostrum and stood for a moment at one of the seats; then she saw a location two rows nearer the minister which she seemed to think was a little more desirable and she moved into it; but before seating herself, she looked diagonally across and saw a still better location and this she finally occupied. She was like sheep—we all are. My flock found it hard to decide just where to eat, where to spend the night, where to lie down in the middle of the day. Feed was abundant because they had the run of the lawn, the orchard, the new piece of clover west of the road, where I got a splendid “catch” last fall. The sweetest grass, tender red-clover leaves and the choicest of alsike would ordinarily be good enough and entirely satisfactory to them; but they stripped half a

dozen four-year-old red-pine transplants of all their foliage; they ignored the sumac up in the wild hedge near the poultry house and peeled the bark off a few sumacs which I had transplanted from the wild hedge into a bed of shrubbery; they nipped the largest sprouts of my little bed of irises which I watched all last summer and which were to blossom this year; they looked with covetous eyes on the six plants of *digitalis gloxinoides* I had just received from the florist and carefully planted, and blighted my hopes of seeing *delphinium formosum* bloom this year, and made a ruinous attack on the *delphinium grandiflorum*, all of which I had received from the same dealer in beautiful and more or less expensive plants for summer flowering.

So I called up a man who lives six or eight miles away and who thought he would buy my flock; he said he would come up on Thursday afternoon and look over these wool-bearing creatures and make me an offer. He was coming Thursday. Wednesday afternoon I went to the barn; there were six mothers there, each with her own beautiful lamb, a source of constant anxiety to her. It was a beautiful sight, the six lambs, the six mothers; and they all cast friendly glances at me as I stood and guessed at the price the dealer would determine upon the next day. This visit was sad, too sad to be prolonged and I left the barn. To stay very long would be to relent and to decide I would keep the entire flock after all.

On my way to the house I sat down at the rock garden. Six lambs born a year ago and therefore "yearlings" came over in a friendly way from the orchard to ask what I was thinking about, and with

the six yearlings was one mother with a lambkin not yet two weeks old. It was an ideal day in early May; the mountains over in Franklin County never seemed quite so blue; the foliage of poplar and maple and wild cherry was amazingly beautiful in the sunlight; the sky had taken on the soft tints of June and the leaden clouds here and there, all except their bases, were glorified by the sun's rays. It was a scene for a painter—the six yearlings, the one mother with her lambkin, the gray rocks of the garden, the orchard for a background.

The lambkin got on a rock and looked over the great field of green grass, each blade of which was as sweet and tender as the blades he had been nipping.

“I don't believe I can eat all this,” he said, as he surveyed what to him must have been a vast expanse of succulence.

It was related somewhere that when Daniel Webster was nearing the end of his life he had his herd at Marshfield driven into the field where he could look from the window and see the beautiful animals he prized so highly, and exclaimed as he gazed at them:

“These are the things that make it hard to die!”

I know not whether there be any basis for the anecdote, but I do know, that while I am not a Daniel Webster, and so far as I know, I am not in my closing moments of life, I said in my heart, as I watched the fleeced creatures and the lambkin and thought of the others in the barn:

“A scene like this makes it hard to take the price the dealer will offer me tomorrow.”

But on the morrow, the buyer failed to keep his appointment and later notified me that he would come at dusk Monday evening. And in the meantime, something happened, that as you will see, was well calculated to make the selling of these ninnies—the parting with them for money—still more difficult. I used the word “ninny” carefully and correctly. “Ninny” is not slang, nor is it as modern as you may think. Like many of our most dignified words—“geography,” “geology,” “telephone,” “telegraph,” “biography” and a host of others—it is of Greek origin. The Greek word is “ninos” which means a foolish or silly person. Is there anything more silly than a sheep?

I do not believe these sheep were really willing to leave this hill; they were kindly treated; they had the run of the orchard, the lawn, the flower garden, and there was nothing to keep them out of the vegetable garden as soon as the peas were up. On Monday evening the buyer was to come at dusk.

Monday afternoon I was sitting on the verandah, resting from a fit of spading and meditating on the limitations of a spinal column that has been in use almost sixty-eight years. The little barn, where the flock spends most of the nights, is near the end of the semi-circular driveway from Applehurst to Clover-Slope. I chanced to look toward the barn just in time to see one of these sheep come around the corner as a bare-back rider appears in the ring at the circus, or the leader in a pageant advances before a crowd of spectators. This sheep started alone, slowly and with queenly dignity to follow the circular driveway; she had moved about forty feet, when

ninny "Number Two," appeared—just as though she were another horse with bare-back rider at the circus, or representing some royal personage in the pageant, and, with the same attempt at dignity and queenly bearing, followed "Number One."

I had never seen sheep act in this way before and I was at once curious and amused. When "Number Two" had got about forty feet from the corner of the barn, ninny "Number Three" appeared just behind the corner, and moved along with the same sheepish grace and air of importance that the other two had exhibited—neither one of them looked to right nor to the left; each acted as though she realized that she was part of a most impressive calvacade and was determined to add to its impressiveness.

These three gray-eyed ruminants were keeping their places and moving along as though keeping step to music, when ninny "Number Four" appeared from around the corner, direct in line with the others and about forty feet behind "Number Three" and, looking neither to right nor left, proceeded over the regular route for the parade.

It was an impressive sight.

I did not know that sheep could assume such a pompous attitude. I was wondering whether the others would follow, until the entire flock was in a pageant intended to impress me with the folly of parting with these creatures, when, instead of a sheep, the lambkin, with its wee little head and ears and with legs as big as its mother's appeared forty feet behind, wiggling its diminutive tail and making grotesque attempts at gamboling quite out of keeping with the otherwise pompous parade.

It appeared as though the lambkin had been introduced as a special feature, its white fleece and clumsy movements being in striking contrast with the gray, gummy fleeces of the other paraders. One more ninny appeared, in order and on time, around the corner and then followed the rest of the sheep and lambs with no semblance of order, like the crowd of rude boys that usually tags a parade of any kind.

It seemed to be a concerted attempt to show off and make me relent and decide to keep this flock—mothers, yearlings, lambs and the lambkin.

Monday evening Ralph and I were talking about the flock—Ralph lives at Clover-Slope and does many things for me which require time and patience, like setting hens, milking and other chores which must be done promptly or not at all. It was just dark and I had explained to Ralph that the buyer had twice agreed to come and see my sheep, twice he had failed to do so, and I was saying what I would do with the precious merinos, when there was a sound of wheels and the regular pacing of horses' hoofs in front of the house.

"He has come; here he is now," said Ralph, and we exchanged greetings with the possible purchaser.

A lantern was lighted and we went to the sheep barn. Of course the sheep all crowded into a corner; the buyer held the lantern over them and scanned them with experienced eyes; he laid his hand on the rump of two or three of them.

"They seem to be in pretty good condition," he said, apparently trying to convince himself that there was a chance to drive a bargain and make a dollar.

"They ought to be," I replied, audibly, and men-

tally added "they've had their pick of clover, grass, peony sprouts, imported iris, delphinium grandiflorum, delphinium formosum, sumac, digitalis gloxinoides, not to mention oats and other grains; they've had the run of the orchard, the north verandah and the rock garden; they've daily drank the water out of the bird-path, persistently and consistently preferring it to the water provided for them. They have been liberally provided for and ought to be fit for market."

The prospective buyer lowered the lantern, which he had been holding over them; leaned against the partition a moment and said:

"What do you want for them?"

What did I want for them? I wanted about one hundred and forty dollars each; were they not *my* sheep, and was not sentiment worth something in a case like this?

It was a cold-blooded, unfeeling question; the man was making no distinction between the flock that had been hovering around Applehurst these spring days and ordinary sheep. It was clear to me that he saw no difference between these objects of my attention and any of the five hundred other sheep he told me he had driven to the slaughter this year.

"I'm not a dickerer," I said meekly; "You may tell me what you will give—the most you can give—and I'll tell you quickly whether or not I'll take it. I'm not as anxious to sell as I was, anyway."

He named the price and I said:

"When will you come for them?"

"Day after tomorrow at one o'clock."

So a man came; he placed a roll of bills in my

hand and went away with the sheep, leaving the lambkin and three other lambs. One of these I gave to a little granddaughter, one to a neighbor's little girl and transferred the other to be taken care of for a time.

Nowhere on the hill is there a sheep today. The solicitous mothers have gone; the yearlings have disappeared and I shall see no more their woolly pates as they look into my window or visit the flower garden; the lambs have vanished—even the lambkin has gambolled his last gambol at Applehurst.

It is not, however an absolutely hopeless case; I still have interests here. Two Plymouth Rock biddies are sitting on hens' eggs; one is brooding over a setting of duck's eggs; another is devoting all her time to incubating thirteen guinea hens' eggs; and two Rhode Island Reds are dreaming of the day when twenty-six pheasants' eggs will burst and liberate the life that is in them.

Sincerely yours,

LETTER XXVIII

Dear Friend Leavens—

A few days ago I chanced to look out of my window and saw a wood chuck coming directly across the lawn as though he belonged here; he was not more than fifty feet from the corner of the house.

“No, Chucky,” I said, “you are not needed here; your presence is not favorable to the development of flower gardens, green peas and beet greens. I’ll ask you to retrace your steps to the pasture where you belong.”

Saying this I went out through the back door, and around the corner of the house, expecting to meet her. She was not visible. I thrust aside the thick branches of lilacs and peered into the dark foliage thinking she must be in hiding; she could not be seen anywhere. I was just abandoning my search when twenty feet from me I saw her watching me as she stood, partly concealed, behind the trunk of one of the pine trees.

“Ah, ha”, I exclaimed “I can go around that pine tree fast enough to get a fair chance at you,” and just then Mrs. Chucky vanished and the place was as though she had not been. Not until I investigated did I learn that she had dug a hole under the pine tree and intended to spend the summer there. Her presence a few feet from my flowers is not necessary for my happiness.

Two days later, a boy was washing paint for me in the back hall on the second floor.

"Hist", he said in a whisper, "Go lightly; go lightly. Come here and I will show you something;" and he was looking out of the window. I followed instructions. Mrs. Chucky had moved. She was close to the cellar door and without the slightest concern, as to her safety, was feasting on yarrow leave in preference to clover, dandelions or any other vegetation. We rapped on the window pane; we opened the window and talked to her and she seemed to think all we said was complimentary and in the nature of a welcome. When, at last, we startled her she disappeared through the rollway into the cellar. So far as I know she intends to share this house with me; she is in the cellar now. How do I know she will not be upstairs under my bed when I retire to-morrow night?

When I went out to water the delphiniums, and digitalis which I set out yesterday—a half dozen roots of each of three varieties having arrived from the dealer—I was surprised to find that a phoebe is building her nest under the roof of the front porch. Mrs. Phoebe seemed to be as much surprised at my presence as I was to discover her nest; but she explained confidentially,—I am betraying a confidence, I think—that she hoped to complete the nest with Mr. Phoebe's help, and raise her little brood and have the phoeblings ready to fly before the family of human kids due here from New Jersey in a few weeks arrives; at least I assume that this is what she said; whatever it was, she said it all in a subdued plaintive tone which I could not resist. You see, sir,

I am not one of the class of landlords so much discussed in the papers at the present time, and if any of my tenants wish their offspring to grow up on my premises, I shall not say "Nay" to them.

LATER

At sunset, May 21, the phoebe was on her nest under the front porch quietly incubating; the small bluebird was busy, as he had been all the afternoon, carrying morsels of food to the bird-house in the Balm of Gilead tree, presumably for his mate though from the large quantities of food stuff he has transported today it may be that the house is full of young birds; a pair of martins had come up from the colony down at Good Will, nearer the Kennebec than this hill top, and was trying to convince the woodswallows whose young must be nearly ready to fly that it was their duty to vacate the premises at once and turn the tenement over to said martins; the woodchuck near the pine tree and just across the lane from the flower garden was reminded in some way of the extra bunch of pine needles needed in her burrough, or I judge so because she suddenly gathered up a bunch of them and disappeared into the earth; just then oh, the wonder of it—a catbird began its evening song in the lilac bush under the Balm of Gilead and a whippoorwill tuned up in the thicket across the road. No catbird had sung so near the house since I have been here; and the whippoorwill was an eighth of a mile nearer than I had known him to come before. Just then a big cat came prowling up the lane—an immense creature bent on carnage. Alas! The things I would have

with me—merino sheep, horses, and pheasant go from me; the things I would not have—woodchucks, cats and whatnot come to me and remain!

I have had the following notices posted at Good Will, and have offered Ralph a reward up here:

NOTICE

“This is the season when young birds are leaving their nests and not being able to fly but a short distance, remain on the ground and are killed by cats. Several cats are prowling about and doing much mischief. I hereby offer \$1.00 reward for any stray cat shot or chloroformed on Good Will Farm; and any cat belonging at Good Will may be taken in the same way if found prowling more than two hundred feet from the cottage where it is claimed. This offer expires July 15, 1921.”

LATER

I have discovered a spirit of unrest and dissatisfaction in the poultry yard; this is an unfortunate condition but I might have known it was inevitable had I given any thought to it. A Plymouth Rock, after sitting on some eggs for about four weeks, hatched out a brood which she declares has not a drop of Plymouth Rock blood in its veins; the web-footed broad-billed prodigies have grown beyond all reason, she declares, and at even this early period she is unable to cover them with her feathers at night as they should be covered. Her constant squaking about the imposition which she lays at my door has made itself felt among the other fowls. A Rhode Island Red in the next coop is equally dis-

grunted because, after weeks of brooding, she has only a few brittle-boned chicks, bearing little resemblance to the beautiful brood she has dreamed of through the long days and nights of incubation.

"They're pheasants" she declared petulently; "just ring-necks, and are bound to desert me and put for the wild woods before they're half grown."

Between the two coops is another biddy, demure, hopeful but more or less restless. She already suspects that the guinea-hen eggs under her warm breast are anything but Plymouth Rock in origin.

"Day after tomorrow's the day I come off" she exclaimed, impatiently; "how do I know whether, when the time comes, I'll find my nest full of web-footed fluffs, field-mice or butterflies."

"Oh, law," she continued in undisguised scorn, "what impositions!"

And the more I think of it, the more inclined I am to believe that there is ground for the disconcerted spirit among the fowls.

All this is across the semi-circle at Clover-Slope but there's an equally disconcerting mix-up of aliens at Applehurst. When the Porters arrived they had a harrowing tale of various episodes on their journey, all because they were determined to bring a pair of rabbits with them. These bunnies are gray and white, spotted, with black eyes; they are plebians at best, without one trace of aristocracy about them. They made the journey in a basket; they were not allowed to travel as personal baggage and had to go on the Fall River boat as express; the railroad officials were equally finicky and refused to check them; they were not clothing nor—well, they were not per-

sonal baggage at all. They were responsible for many anxious moments on the wharf and at the railroad station; they caused some vexatious delays of the entire party and to said delays and vexations should be added \$1.50 in cash for fees and the like; but they are here—the two and they are loose on the premises.

One of the lambs that I disposed of a few weeks ago is back here for the summer; he inherits various tendencies from “Old Billy” and what is before us ’twixt now and September no one can predict. A Belgian Police pup, a few weeks old, has come to share the place with the four lineal descendants of your humble servant. Lambkin, puppy, woodchucks, rabbits!

As Aunt Sophia Taft would say: “Mercy on us; what next?”

Cordially yours,

LETTER XXIX

Dear Friend—

Now that we are approaching the holidays I am wondering if I ever told you the experience I had a year ago; I do not think I did and so I will record it here for your perusal.

It was the Christmas season; for two weeks we had been in it; the sounds of it, the joy of it and the spirit of it had been growing.

In an address before the Colby students—students who had arranged Christmas service before going away for the holidays—I had said:

“We are on the threshold of the Christmas season; we already feel it and know it. The Christmas spirit is increasing; it will continue to grow until December 25th; then it will suddenly subside—unfortunately but inevitably—to be revived again, however, twelve months hence.”

And after the body of that address had been given I closed with the words:

“Let us enter into it with all our heart; let us greet our fellows with good cheer as we pass on the street; let us send greetings of good will and receive them, each doing a part in the rising tide of Christmas cheer and merriment.”

I had responded fairly well to my own exhortation in the days that followed; the exchange of gifts between members of my family had been witnessed and enjoyed; messages of Christmas cheer had been

received and sent—packages, letters, cards, telegrams. I had gone my regular annual rounds of the Christmas-tree in the cottages at Good Will—in fact I had taken Santa Claus in my own auto, as he seemed to be without reindeer, horses or other means of progress—and had entered each cottage just after Santa Claus had paid a visit to it and departed through the back door and in each place I had been told that Santa had been there, but had just left; yes, in each cottage, in presence of the young people, I had sighed, expressed my impatience and disappointment and the hope that I might yet overtake him before he left the community.

In my home we had gathered around a little tree loaded with Christmas things, and had announced the person for which each gift, large or small, was intended; the expressions of pleasure on the part of those of mature years, the shouts of delight and merriment from the little ones had all been good for a heart that was, perchance, beginning to feel the chill of age. I was sixty-seven years old at that time—sixty-seven, and going on sixty-eight; three score years and ten was not far distant at best.

In the chapel at Good Will, I had preached a Christmas sermon, announced Christmas hymns and offered prayer of thanksgiving for Christmas time and all it signifies. My house at Willow-Wood had been kept open until midnight to welcome the thirty singers, who, returning from their rounds, with Christmas carols, would be grateful for sandwiches and hot cocoa and music in doors—this too, was good for a heart beginning to feel the chill of age—sixty-seven and going on sixty-eight.

On the brow of the hill, a mile away, as the crow flies, was Applehurst; the white house with its bottle-green blinds and snow-laden roof stood grim and cheerless in the frost; it was cold and silent within; it was silent and cold without. Once, a day or two before Christmas as I had a waking vision of the place and recalled winter scenes within its painted walls, I said:

"This would be a great time to be at Applehurst; I've half a mind to go up and start a fire on the hearth," but no one of my family, to whom the remark was addressed, said: "Go, by all means, father," and so I had deferred the little warming-up till after Christmas; the lock in the north door, where I always enter Applehurst in winter, remained untouched.

And now Christmas was over—past and gone; the commonplace prediction in the Colby College address was being fulfilled—the spirit had reached its apogee and was receding; and it was getting very cold. The night that Santa Claus went his rounds and theoretically I was trying to overtake him, he remarked upon the temperature of his body every time he got into the auto to ride to the next place:

"Gee, but this is hot!" he would say; "I didn't know just how much clothing to put on."

And at the next place:

"Whew! I never sweat so in my life! It can't be a very cold night anyway, but you see this toggery is warm—it surely is!"

But since that the temperature had dropped—the thermometer going down with it—and Marten Stream, which flows so silently into the Kennebec

not far from Willow-Wood, and a mile, as the crow flies, from Applehurst, was frozen over for the first time that winter. Everybody was hoping that the announcement would go out from the Good Will office that the ice on Marten Stream was safe and skating in order, though the Kennebec was still, a part of the way, as open as in summer time. And then, three days after Christmas, the mercury registered twenty below. Glorious! The blood in the veins of every boy quickened its flow; skates were gotten out and sharpened; everybody was waiting for the word "Go to Marten."

Of all this I was in unfortunate ignorance; I do not mean I was ignorant of the drop in temperature, but I did not understand—or had failed to comprehend—that the first skating of the winter was imminent.

It was too cold to warm Applehurst for a party; but a blaze could be kindled in the Franklin fireplace, in the little chamber over the kitchen; the room was big enough for two to be happily by themselves, or four or six could find comfortable sitting and much good cheer in the somewhat limited space.

The latter possibility appealed to me strongly—a party of six with red apples, corn-popping, marsh-mallow roast, games, sociability; but just then I met "Fat". "Fat" is a boy of social qualifications; he fits into a crowd or a select party, or he can be an agreeable solitary guest.

When I saw "Fat" sitting in the boiler-room in the Buckminster at Good Will, his round face moist with perspiration, after a fit of vigorous feeding of the furnace and coated unevenly with coal-dust, various

possibilities for the evening crystalized into one definite plan.

"What are you going to do this evening, "Fat?" I queried, after the greetings of the fast vanishing Christmas season.

"Don't know," responded "Fat" his white teeth in amusing contrast to his coal-dusted chin; "not anything, I guess."

"You haven't any plan for the evening, and there's nothing going on—sure?" I asked.

"Nothing that I know about" said "Fat," and the whites of his eyes shone like polished porcelain, under eyebrows made doubly heavy and black with the dust from the coal-shovel.

"How would it do for you and me to take supper at Applehurst at six o'clock, and breakfast there tomorrow morning—baked potatoes, fried bacon, buckwheat cakes, cabbage salad, crabapple jelly, buttered toast, Ceylon tea, sardines, lamb chops, Baldwin apples, roasted marshmallows, Christmas chocolate, hey?"

"That would be fine," ejaculated "Fat," as he gave another unconscious exhibition of shining teeth and eyes in a coal-black setting, "fine."

"Would you really like to come?" I queried.

"I'd be very glad to come," said "Fat."

"Very well; I'll be delighted to have you. Please arrive at Applehurst at just six; we'll eat at six-thirty."

It was one-thirty when "Fat" and I made the compact; a walk over the Bowdoin Trail from Good Will to Applehurst was good for any man that day over the crisp, glistening snow, under the low-hanging

branches of fir and hemlock—branches loaded with the same crystal white from heaven that crested the roofs of buildings, crowned the chimney-tops and squeaked under each foot-step, but especially invigorating for a man sixty-seven, going on sixty-eight, and three score years and ten not far distant.

I had opened Applehurst; the kitchen stove was red with heat, fairly good progress had been made toward the supper which was to be at six-thirty; a fire in the "Franklin" had sent a genial warmth to every corner and cranny in the little chamber; lamps had been trimmed, their chimneys cleaned, and there were some appetizing odors in the atmosphere, when the telephone rang 257-11, at just half past five o'clock. I answered the call.

"The fact is," said Assistant Supervisor N. H. Hinckley, "there will be skating tonight—the first of the season on Marten. 'Fat' wants to skate; he says that, if you would like to have him, he will come up at eight-forty-five or nine; will it be all right?"

"All right for him to skate," I said.

"Shall he come at eight-forty-five or nine?" queried the Assistant Supervisor.

"No, not under any circumstances—no indeed."

Putting up the receiver, I said, and said it aloud—the first human voice heard in the silent old house for a number of days:

"All right, and all wrong; all right for 'Fat' to prefer skating with a crowd of his own age, to spending the hours up here in a little room warmed with a stove, and in company of a man sixty-seven—going on sixty-eight, and three score and ten not far distant; but all wrong, when he has accepted the in-

vation, had said he would be glad to come. "Fat" knows I'm sensitive; he knows that I don't expect young folk to prefer my company to that of their comrades; he knows that I often hesitate to ask fellows like him to accompany me anywhere for pleasure, because I have no right to assume that 'seventeen years' prefers 'sixty-seven' years for comradeship. I'm through; it is fine to be through—to know that one has done well his part along any line of service. Forty-four years ago I began opening my room to young people; this custom was begun in the school-teaching days in Kingston; it was kept up through the years of my pastorates—the boys were always welcome; through more than thirty years I have given the young at Good Will first place in all my thoughts—my summer outings have been subject to their wishes; my winter days off have looked to them for comradeship; all these years it has been evident that there would be a lonely old age for me if I live to reach it, and three score and ten is not now far distant. I have known that the time would come when the young would not understand; youth would forget and the chasm between my years and the High School age would become so wide that it could no longer be crossed, the chasm has reached that depth; it has expanded to the fatal width; 'Fat' has proved it to me. It interests me to know, here and now, that I have extended my last invitation to youth; hereafter the young will come and go—the young will think of me as one they used to see occasionally walking across Good Will Farm alone; the newly come will take a look at me, as I'm pointed out as the old man of the place; it will be understood

that when this old man was younger he used to choose the young for comradeship; that the hike, the fishing trip, the camps, the open fires in winter at Applehurst, in the Bungalow, at Willow-Wood were many; then as he passed Christmas, of his sixty seventh year—going on sixty-eight—he suddenly stopped it all. They will never know; but I can never forget that ‘Fat’ showed me that the time had come for the change. Henceforth I’m to be a memory in the hearts of a few for a little time—only a memory. I’m glad I’m through.”

I was not particularly happy though I tried to persuade myself that I was. Closing the damper in the kitchen stove, and carefully undoing all the preparations I had made for my prospective guest, I locked the north door, put out the lower lights and went upstairs. It was my plan to devote the evening to the little library I had collected and arranged on a small shelf in the cozy little room over the kitchen. Above the mirror that hangs between the two north windows was my gun—the firearm which I used on my last hunting trip; opposite the gun and over the door were my skates placed there for all time, a silent reminder of younger days; against the wall nearby was my set of golf sticks, souvenir of days passed and gone; and finally, over the lounge in the alcove, against the brown wall paper stood out in hard relief my snow shoes telling the story of former years—the years when muscles were hard and the white hills inviting on frosty nights.

Into this room I went and closed the door; drawing the easy chair between the fire and the shelves of

books I gave myself up to a proposed evening of literary pleasure.

My eyes first rested on a volume bound in dark blue; it was Dillon Wallace's "Long Labrador Trail." I took it from its place and turned to the first page; the author's autograph was there and words of greeting and friendship. But I would not have time to re-read the book, so I turned to the best chapter and began reading. My mind wandered. What if, instead of looking to the young for comradeship I had devoted my leisure to such men as Wallace—God bless him—I would not now be as lonely as I am; and "Fat" knew better than to do as he did—he surely knew it was a breach of good manners, but never mind. And the book went back to its place on the shelf.

The "Moose Book" was near it, a portly volume once read from cover to cover with pleasure and profit; now I looked at the pictures which were fine, scanned the table of contents which seemed complete, but found neither profit nor pleasure; and "Fat" should be taught that an invitation to supper ought not to be accepted and then unfeelingly cast aside.

How often I had consulted that volume which is known in my Applehurst library as the "Pet-Book"—the book that tells of dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea-pigs, rats, mice, reptiles, batrachians, fishes, pigeons, bantams, pheasants, guinea-fowl, doves, hawks, and owls; perhaps it would yield me solace; at least it might prove once more to be of passing interest. I opened it at random, and read on the second page, opposite some excellent pictures of Belgian hares:

"As the Belgian Hare is now by far the most pop-

ular breed, both in this country and in England, it may be considered first. It has, of course" no connection with "Fat" who might, at least have notified me earlier in the afternoon, that he preferred skating with his schoolmates to a hollow evening alone with me at Applehurst, and—

It was no use; why try to read natural history, when science and sentiment were so mixed in my thoughts. The "Pet Book" had a pathetic, discarded appearance, as, in its dull brown cover, it found its place again on the shelf.

But Mills' "Beaver World" had not been consulted in a long time; it would be as fresh as though I had never seen it. Out came the gray covered book; it had been a gift to me on Lake George, New York, in 1916, and had beautiful associations. After looking at the inscription of friendship on the first page, I let the book open where it would, and believing that one place would be as interesting as another, I began on the forty-fifth:

"Extensive autumn rambles in the mountains with especial attention to beaver customs compel me to conclude that as a basis for weather predictions beaverdom is not reliable. In the course of one autumn month in the mountains of Colorado"—"Fat" accepted an invitation after he had told me that he had nothing to do, and then, after preparations were well under way for the meal, he asked if he could go skating instead. Nonsense! where, when and how had natural history lost its charm? When and where did poor "Fat" get mixed up with moose, beavers, Belgian hares and what-not?

I acted leisurely. The evening was passing: there

was no mistake about that, and it was not yielding much of interest or happiness. The Christmas tide was receding as the sea would if an earthquake should open and let all the water into the bowels of the earth. Science was failing me, but multitudes have found solace in poetry. I would discard nature and science; poetry should take my mind off the fact that "Fat" had led me to cut loose from the comradeship of youth forever and forever and forever.

Out from among my library treasures came a green covered "Anthology of Garden and Nature Poems"—a strictly modern, up-to-date book of poetry, and surely it would speak to me. It did. The first poem I saw began:

"When I looked into your eyes I saw a garden
With peonies and twinkling pogodas,
And round-arched bridges—"

and "Fat" sitting in the boiler-room, with his black face and glistening ivories, smiling and assuring me that he would be glad to spend the evening with "sixty-seven," going on sixty-eight, and three score and ten not far distant.

It seemed to me as though the room was anything but cheerful; the green shade on the heavy bronze lamp appeared to be unnecessarily thick and sombre; I did not like it and it was promptly taken off and put on a shelf in the corner of the room; even then the room was anything but cheerful—I had never realized before what a somber brown shade of paper I had selected for it the preceding summer. If I had known!

But I was not going to give up nor be defeated. I had abandoned the companionship of youth—that

was settled; I was to get my enjoyment in some other way than keeping in touch—or trying to—with young minds so fickle that one knows not at one-thirty what he will want to do at six-thirty of the same afternoon. I turned the pages of the anthology aimlessly. Ah ha! Here was something that looked attractive; I would pause and read: I did:

“I will be the gladdest thing
Under the sun;
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one;
I will look at the cliff and clouds—”

and see “Fat” tipping back in his chair, both hands pressing against the back-side of his head as he solemnly lies to me, telling me that he enjoys my company, when, as a matter of fact, no one at seventeen cares a rap for sixty-seven, unless it’s a parent or a grandparent.

The Christmas tide was about out; but it was all I could expect. I had not kept up with modern poetry; if there was companionship for me among the poets it would be found with those of a former generation; modern poetry did not seem to have arresting power—it could not stop the melancholy meditation upon the sudden change that had come into my life, nor even the unconscious cause of it—the boy who at that moment was gliding over Marten Stream under the Christmas moon.

I would go back to the literary favorites of my own youth, for once I was only seventeen; surely Fitz Greene Halleck’s “Marco Bozarris,” which I, in common with all school boys in those days, had declaimed, would warm my heart. Strange to relate,

the book was destined to be of only momentary interest. I read:

“At midnight in his guarded tent,
The Turk was dreaming of the hour—”

when “Fat” might have said to the other fellows—the boys and girls of his own age—“I’d like to skate, but I have an engagement at six o’clock sharp, and I must not miss it.” He would have done that, were his appointment with some one of his own age—male or female—but sixty-seven, going on sixty-eight, can be turned down at a moment’s notice. But I’m glad he did it. I’m through.

With Halleck back on the shelf, there was small choice; two small volumes of poems remained, but happily they were both reliable; I could not doubt their value, or their power to get me out of myself, to gently lead my soul away from the grim determination that possessed it; not that I would ever change, but so long as the purpose had been formed to ignore youth the rest of my life, why could not I go on happily in my path.

“Listen, my children,”

I read, as I opened the volume of Longfellow’s poems,

“Listen, my children, and you shall hear,
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the 18th of April, in ’75,
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year”—

“Fat” said to his friend that he would be at Applehurst at six o’clock———

Perhaps Whittier—dear old Whittier—could inspire me with pleasant thoughts. I turned instinctively to “The Bare-foot Boy” and read:

“Blessings on thee, little man,” bare-foot—“Fat”, you upset my plan for this evening in fine shape, and I would not mind that at all, *only*, it happens that you have brought about a sudden transition in my life. You’ll understand perhaps, sometime, that you and I never go anywhere together again—fishing, hiking, camping—but you’ll never know why. And some of the boys will understand that I no longer do as I’ve been doing, but I’m glad you’ve done it, only I wish—I wish you had put off your dastardly act ten or a dozen years. For the life of me I don’t know how I can live as long as I want to, cut off from the friendship of the young, and debarred from the experiences that have given zest to my living.

It was at this juncture that I put the poetical volumes back on the shelf and turned to fiction. “Christmas is past,” I said, in my heart, “but the spirit of Christmas still lingers—lingers everywhere so far as I know, except in this little room full of gloom and resentment. It’s not too late to read one of Murray’s ‘Holiday Tales,’ and I’ll do it. But a glance at the timepiece showed that the evening was far spent; it was already ten-thirty, and a gloomy one it had been. No; there was only time to look at those wonderful lines with which Murray closed his story of ‘John Norton’s Vagabond,’” and these I read:

“AH, FRIENDS, DEAR FRIENDS, AS YEARS GO ON AND HEADS GET GRAY—HOW FAST THE GUESTS DO GO. TOUCH HANDS, TOUCH HANDS WITH THOSE THAT STAY. STRONG HANDS TO WEAK, OLD HANDS TO YOUNG, AROUND THE CHRISTMAS BOARD TOUCH

HANDS. THE FALSE FORGET, THE FOE FORGIVE, FOR EVERY GUEST WILL GO AND EVERY FIRE BURN LOW, AND CABIN EMPTY STAND. FORGET, FORGIVE, FOR WHO MAY SAY THAT CHRISTMAS DAY MAY EVER COME TO HOST OR GUEST AGAIN. TOUCH HANDS."

I would not want to say that the lamp, minus its dark green shade, suddenly gave an upward flare and remained at its highest illuminating power, 'till I retired; I cannot prove that it did and there were no other witnesses. Nor do I dare say that the brown paper on the walls that had seemed so somber an hour before suddenly changed and became several shades lighter, for no one would believe me. But it must be stated in all candor, that something happened in the little room as I read these words. Then I sat back in the easy chair, placed my feet in front of the "Franklin" and closed my eyes.

"It's not too late yet, to add a little to the interest of the season," I remarked to myself, after a half hour of meditation. "I'll have Moody Hall opened one night this week, and all the boys shall be invited—yes the boys and the girls—and I'll see that 'Fat' is there, and I will read my best stories—one, two or three of them; and besides that, I'll bring some chairs up into this room, some night this week,—into this room of gloom and light, of resentment and surrender,—and I will invite some boys, as many as the room can accommodate, and there will be refreshments, and I will read the best stories I have left, and, well, 'Fat' will be invited to come with the rest".

Yours for a Merry Christmas,

LETTER XXX

Dear Friend:—

In the past you may have noticed a similarity in my letters; but you may keep in mind, if you feel so disposed, that there is a limit to excitement in a place like Applehurst. Applehurst is not a center of population; up here I have never encouraged immigration of undesirables; there are no overcrowded tenements here on the hill—though I suspect I kept ten more pullets in my poultry shed last winter than was consistent with the best health of the biddies. There is always variety in the sunsets; the wind changes at varying intervals and the distant mountains are more clearly discernable some days than others. But these are not items which I need write you; leaving out the temperature, atmospheric changes and petty details of life here, any attempt at correspondence is likely to become more or less stereotyped. You must not expect any thrills in my epistles as you might, were I “on the frontier” or were I writing you from some “great mart of trade.”

But this letter is of another kind. It is different. If I succeed in placing facts before you as they actually exist, and if after you have read what is to follow, you review it, you will find this letter lamentable in its contents; it is saturated with melancholy; it is dripping with pathos.

And because I am in that state of mind this morn-

ing I would like to administer a gentle shock to someone, or at least give a thrill—it's a chill rather than thrill in me—I shall state the conclusion first and then go into details afterwards.

I have sold out; I have sold out at less than cost; I have sold out at a sacrifice.

I did not like the idea of a bankrupt sale—it might hurt my future credit; a "sheriff's sale," whatever that may be, has a "legal proceedings" sound that is distasteful, and I do not want the memory of it attached to this locality; and there is something too sad and gruesome about an auction to make the idea here and now tolerable.

When in 1917 we were all stirred by the announcement that food would win the war and news came that a college had ploughed up its campus and planted it to potatoes, and a millionaire had surrendered the great lawn on his estate for a field of beans and we were exhorted to poke beet seed and lettuce-seed and cucumber seed into every crack and crevice in the back yard that contained soil enough to answer the requirements for germination, I fell in line.

Of course the Government would not accept a man of my age for military service, but I could help win the war. I wanted to do it in a worth-while fashion. No back-door-yard garden for me; a machine gun has greater possibilities than a rifle.

And so, as you know, I bought a pair of horses, a set of double harness and other things in like manner. By "things," I mean farming implements, fertilizers, hens, pigs, cows—just things, and all

kinds of things. I stopped at nothing that would help win the war.

But I made one mistake. The day after the armistice was signed I should have announced that a special sale of implements of warfare at Applehurst—souvenirs of the World War, relics of a great conflict and the like. It would have been a glorious victory. I might then have put a gilded eagle on my flag-staff, a cupola on my sheep barn to match the one on the cow barn, and some Liberty Bonds, purchased with the proceeds of my sale into the deposit box.

But I held on; I loved the war up here on the hill, and kept on fighting just as though the armistice had not been signed. I was like a soldier who has been honorably discharged after good service, saying:

“Let me fight; let me carry on the war just the same—I like it and I won’t quit fighting.”

Before 1917 I had never wanted to devote my time to farming, because other men could produce all the food and food products the world needed; when it became so plain that all I could possibly raise was needed by this hungry world, why—well, in I went.

It is now March, 1921. The potatoes I raised in 1920 are in the cellar—potatoes are thirty cents a bushel; not a carrot of the 1920 cultivation and harvest sold; not an ounce of wool disposed of, though wool is now worth fifteen cents a pound if there were a demand for it; it is going to cost a lot to have the products of last year’s farming put out of the cellar and back to the land again; and my tax bill not yet

paid. The world does not need my efforts at farming, when millions of bushels of potatoes and the like are unmarketable.

So I have sold out. It happened that just as I was deciding to quit war, I was in Portland, Maine, and a dollar-sale was in progress. In one store the sign "\$1.00" was pasted on the inside of the plate-glass windows and the "\$1.00" was formed of dollar bills.

The idea appealed to me. Why not have a dollar-sale at Applehurst? Why not come home and look over my possessions—the implements of war I had acquired since I began to fight—and see how many I could afford to mark at one dollar each and clean up the whole business, perhaps in a single day. I felt quite sure I could make a success of such a sale and dispose of any article I might be willing to part with at one dollar. I made out a list without much difficulty, though I occasionally suffered a twinge.

First there was the potato-digger. I do not remember how much I paid for it, even, but the present price is somewhat over a hundred dollars I believe.

One potato-digger.....\$1.00

The potato-planter was a complicated affair; I rented it once or twice last year, but it was in good condition. It seemed like an enormous discount, but I made the entry.

One potato-planter.....\$1.00

Then followed cultivator, sulky plow, mowing machine, horse-rake and other things, each at one dollar.

It was when I came to the horses that I suffered the twinges. Horses are not in the same class with

rakes and cultivators; horses are living things; they mean something. But my relations to the dumb animals on my farm were peculiar anyway. Billy, the buck, was about the only quadruped that seemed to have any respect for me, though in his case respect seemed to amount almost to admiration. Whenever he was browsing in the orchard and I followed the semi-circular drive from Applehurst to Clover-Slope, Billy, if he chanced to be near the beaten path would stand at attention until I had gone past him; standing at attention, he would not, so far as I could see, move a muscle until I was out of the range of his observation. He seemed to say:

“Behold, the lord of the manor—how lordly his tread! Hail to the master of Applehurst,—how masterful his bearing! Honor to the man who owns this ranch or would if the mortgage could be raised!”

My horses seemed to care naught for me—not a thing unless I chanced to have a carrot or a handful of corn, and even then they would take no account of me; they always acted as though they expected me to admire them. The cows and live stock were just as thoughtless and their attitude was one of supreme indifference; the only exception to this was a two-year-old heifer that appeared to be paying me great reverence but it was due to the fact that she had the pneumonia when only five months old and it left her with a peculiar twist to her neck that made her appear much more reverent than she was; I so understand it. But I wrote it down.

One horse, “Tweedledum”.....\$1.00

Tweedledum cost me two hundred and sixty-five dollars in 1917. Tweedledum is worth as much to-

day as the day I made the purchase; but I bought Tweedledum to help win the war, and the war is over; as a souvenir of a great conflict Tweedledum would have to be fed, groomed and watered daily. This is not feasible.

Tweedledee, the mate of Tweedledum, presented a problem. Tweedledee lost the sight of one eye in 1918. I do not know what a horse's eye is worth, but it stands to reason that a one-eyed horse would be regarded as a defective animal, and not worth quite so much as a horse with perfect optics.

"If Tweedledum goes for one dollar," I said in my heart, "ought I to list Tweedledee at ninety-nine cents?"

It seemed logical, and so I made the entry:

One horse, "Tweedledee".....\$.99

A twinge! It did not seem fair to the faithful creature, and I exclaimed:

"I won't do it; I vow I won't. Tweedledee shall not go for a cent less than Tweedledum, and so an erasure was made and the straightforward, uncompromising entry appeared in its place:

One horse, "Tweedledee".....\$1.00

The rest was easy. Having entered the two finest animals on the place at the scheduled price, I had no difficulty in rating cultivators, sprayers and other souvenirs for the dollar-sale.

But I drew the line at my wheel-barrow. No longer engaged in the commendable enterprise of winning the world war, it is still incumbent upon me to have a garden; a garden for peas and string-beans, cannas and delphiniums, beets, and melons, marigolds and sweet-peas.

I will not sell that wheel-barrow for a cent less than six dollars—not a cent; and I plan to buy a new garden line and a lawn mower this spring to go with it. My lawn last year was more profitable than any farming operations; I got no money out of my potato field or my rows of carrots and corn, but I did get some enjoyment out of the African marigolds, the tropical appearance of the mass of cannas and the nasturtium bed.

I found a ready purchaser at Good Will; the Good Will Home Association picked up each and every dollar bargain; it holds my receipt for twenty-nine souvenirs sold at eighteen dollars, the lot, actual value one thousand and eighteen dollars and Applehurst's dollar-sale is now a thing of the past.

No, I do not regret that I did my share in helping win the war, but when it closed, I should have insisted upon an honorable discharge.

Cordially yours,

LETTER XXXI

My Dear Mr. B.—

You know that, not long since, I gave an address before the Ball Bird Club, in Augusta, Maine—an address in which I discussed the “Birds of Good Will.” I say “you know” because I saw you in the audience, and you appeared to give close attention to all I had to say upon my subject. You will recall that, in my introductory remarks, I said that there were three things in this interesting world of which I was consciously ignorant—things about which I was aware that I knew but very little, if anything.

I remarked that I was born a boy; was a boy for several years previous to my entering upon man’s estate; that since leaving boyhood-days behind me, I have read much about boys, have listened to lectures on boys, attended conferences about boys, have had two sons grow up in my home, have associated much with boys in Good Will cottages, in camp, on hikes, in religious services, in the school-room—everywhere—and have a growing consciousness of my ignorance of them, and never am I so painfully convinced of it as when I am about to meet some appointment to speak in public about them—to tell all I know.

I stated that I was born on a farm, spent the first seventeen years of my life on my father’s level acres, in Connecticut, and since then have been separated from farm and country-life less than six years; that

I have had an eye on the operations on a farm that under my direction grew from one hundred and twenty-five acres to something like a thousand acres; that I have read magazine articles on farming, have listened to lectures, taken farm journals, talked with practical farmers, embarked on an individual farming experience from 1917 to 1921 to help save our country by raising my share of the world's food supply, and I am fully convinced that I know nothing about the most honorable, noble and useful employment in the world.

I further asserted that I have been preaching for more than forty years; that I have read volumes, attended lectures, listened to learned discussions, have been a student of the Bible and that I have been convinced for a long time that I do not know anything about theology; that I have never preached theology, having always restricted myself to practical religion rather than attempting the discussing of theological dogmas, fearing the responsibility of attempting to be a teacher of a subject of which I know so little.

I did not, in that address on "Birds of Good Will" use quite as many words as I have here, but that was the substance of my declaration. And then, you will recall, I remarked that since attempting to deliver a few "bird lectures" I had become aware of how little I know about our feathered friends—little I mean, compared with what there is to be known, and what I wish I knew.

It was only a round-about, wordy way of confessing that the more attention and study we give to any subject in this world, the more conscious we become

of the vastness of the field and how little of it we have mastered, or can ever master.

Was it Newton who likened himself to a child playing on a beach and tossing a pebble into the vast ocean before him? As I remember it, the great philosopher noticed that the pebble made very slight impression on the briny deep.

I know something about astronomy, and why knowledge of it is satisfactory, as far as it goes; I can find the Big Dipper and Pleiades, the sweet influences of which cannot be bound; usually I can point out the Polar Star though there are two twinkling lights up in that vicinity so much alike in appearance and location, it's the one—the one in the place where “He has stretched out the north over the empty space”; and the Milky Way is always easy; but I am never depressed over my ignorance of the stars, because I do not yet know enough about them to realize how little I know.

There are many people, thank the Lord, who are delving into the mysteries yet to be explored. When in summer-time, the lightning streaks across the black curtains in the northwest, as I sit on the veranda here at Applehurst, and the report thereof reverberates up and down the Kennebec Valley, I know the storm is electrical; when I press a button at Willow-Wood and the dark room is instantly flooded with light, I know that it is electricity subject to human control that does it; I know that there is an electric sweeper in my home and that it has been gravely, and on several occasions, boldly hinted that an electric laundry and an electric dish-washer would be wonderfully useful and labor saving; I

know that there are people who have gone deep into the wonders of the mysterious fluid, and that the depth of my pocket-book may be sounded; I know that, hidden away in the bowels of my automobile, there is something which I have never seen that is called a "sparker" but these things do not disturb me, because I don't know enough about electricity to be impressed by my ignorance of it.

And it does not humiliate me as much—not half as much—to say "I don't know" as it did forty years ago; the sum of human knowledge and the possibilities of research are so vast that there be few, if any, that know much; the more they know about one subject the less they possibly know about some other subject equally important to someone, if not to themselves.

But there is something else now, of which I am getting to be consciously ignorant. Some years ago—about 1917—I was seized with an impulse to write letters to one or two of my friends—I mean long, wordy, rambling letters—and the more I wrote, the more I wanted to write. And there was a man in New York City who read each and every letter—read them and said so much about them that I wanted to write him again and again; and then came the desire to write better letters—letters really worth reading. Then I began to be impressed with the fact that letter-writing is an art—and it has been said it is now a "lost art" and that people no longer know how to write letters.

But I kept on, because my friend to whom I was writing—"Life Member, Manhattan,"—would overlook the violation of rules and principles, and accept

all I had to offer him. And now "Life Member, Manhattan" is dead. I cannot write to him any more and as I look about for a new correspondent I suddenly open my eyes to the fact that I do not know the rules, the underlying principles of the art. There are five things, instead of four only, of which my ignorance is troublesome—boys, farming, theology, birds and letter-writing.

And I am wondering if I may write this letter to you with assurance that it will be received as "Life Member, Manhattan" received the epistles I addressed to him.

It was my privilege to have been born early enough in the world's history, so I could hear some of the great pulpit orators whose names were household words a generation or more ago, each leaving his impression upon the age in which he lived—each in a class by himself—such men as Beecher, Moody, Talmadge, Murray, Joseph Parker—thrilling the hearts and inspiring the souls of multitudes who admired them, and becoming targets for the hordes of peoples who can condemn even if they do not understand.

To me the most magnetic of them all was Murray; the most impressive and unforgettable was Joseph Parker, of the City Temple, in London. The last named was noted, in the minds of the critics, for what was called his colossal self-conceit. One day, walking along a country-road with a friend who had never heard Parker preach, I chanced to mention him in terms of admiration and praise. My friend quickly related an incident which, in his judgment, illustrated the great man's egotism. He said that

Dr. Parker was about to enter the City Temple of London, one Sunday morning, when he received a cablegram, announcing the death of Rev. T. DeWitt Talmadge, D.D., in Washington, D. C. He was profoundly affected by the unexpected news. Dr. Parker, had for many years, kept a Bible in the Temple, in which he had asked the great men who at any time had preached in that pulpit, to place their autographs.

On the Sunday morning in question, Dr. Parker opened that Bible, and, after the manner of a school-master, at the opening exercises of the day's session, called the roll.

It was the custom, as you know, in such schools, for some pupil qualified to do it, to answer "Absent" for any absentee whose name was called. After this manner Dr. Parker proceeded:

"Rev. John Hall, D.D.—*dead*; Rev. Henry Ward Beecher,—*dead*; Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon,—*dead*; Rev. T. DeWitt Talmadge, D.D.—*dead*;" and then reverently closing the book, bowing his head in sorrow, with indescribable pathos he exclaimed:

"I feel very lonesome this morning."

Whether the incident had any basis in fact, I do not know; if it had, whether it was related correctly by my friend, I cannot tell, but it was given in good faith by him as an illustration of the great preacher's self-conceit; did he not, by his act that Sunday morning, have the audacity to place himself in the list of great preachers, as though he thought he belonged there?

I could not approve of my friend's attitude; Dr. Parker belonged among the world's great preachers,

and he, by virtue of the position he held, the pulpit he had occupied for so many years, and his unique career, knew it.

Up here alone, today, I am calling the roll of men who stood by me in sympathy and conferred with me often and left indelible impressions upon Good Will and upon myself; they were men who had done well their tasks and I am not necessarily placing myself in their class, when I do it.

In part the roll-call is like this: "Hon. Moses Giddens, Bangor, Me.,—*dead*; Mr. George Henry Quincy, Boston, Mass.,—*dead*; Mr. Walter M. Smith, Stamford, Conn.,—*dead*; Mr. A. N. Ryerson, Noroton, Conn.,—*dead*; Judge Nathaniel Hobbs, North Berwick, Maine,—*dead*; Thomas W. Hall, New Canaan, Conn.,—*dead*; 'Life Member, Manhattan,' Brooklyn, N. Y.,—*dead*.

It is this last response that, today, gives me a sense of loneliness. Since 1917 I have been writing these letters—long, rambling letters you may say, but the best I knew how, to "Life Member, Manhattan." And now he no longer responds to the roll-call; his life work is ended and his last task performed.

I have stood by many caskets; I have prayed over the lifeless forms of little children and my soul has been filled with a sense of unfathomable mystery; I have stood by the dead body of a father or mother whose children could not understand until the sun should set that they had suddenly become fatherless or motherless, and I have been filled with pity; but neither mystery nor pity haunted me on the evening that I stood by the side of the casket of "Life Mem-

ber, Manhattan". No; neither "pity" nor "mystery" but "triumph" was the word.

I called on a friend and she mentioned the swift passage of days and weeks, and spoke of her own advanced age.

"I hope the fact that you have lived so long is not disquieting to you," I said.

She replied, with a smile, that quite the reverse was true; that she had always liked to see things completed and that to see anything finished had given her special pleasure, and now she was interested in the finishing touches of her own life; its completion was near at hand.

I think I am coming to be like her in this respect; I have always been interested in building; the breaking of ground for a new structure, and the laying of a corner-stone have been occasions of special satisfaction; the sight of new lumber, piles of brick and stone gradually taking form and symmetry are especially gratifying. I have been interested too, in character-building—a youth laying foundations for life and a career is always an inspiration; but more and more I love to see things finished—I admit it. And so, the end of an aged man's life—a man like "Life Member, Manhattan" is an inspiration rather than a sorrow, as soon as I get beyond the first sense of loss. He had formed, in early life, a purpose; over the formation of a symmetrical life and character he had talked and prayed; he had been determined to run with patience the race that was set before him, and all this he had succeeded in doing.

I cannot help it—I always have a sense of triumph

in my heart when I stand by the casket of one who has finished a full life and completed a symmetrical character. No; I cannot mourn. Why should I mourn when a man completes his work and rounds out his life?

Did you ever try to think what this world would be, if there were no deaths—if men could not die? What if it had been decreed that man should be born into this life, pass through infancy, childhood, youth, manhood and reach old age and continue to grow old, but never die. Can you imagine it? All our ancestors, back through the centuries, still living; all of them infirm, decrepid, diseased, sightless, deaf, worn-out, wretched through age but still living!

Was there ever a more benign provision than this, that when a man's work is done and his vision dimmed and his hearing impaired and his body worn out and the mental qualities failing, the heart shall finally stop beating and the mortal body returned to its kindred element—"earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust?"

So I am not mourning over the triumph of "Life Member, Manhattan". But, as I come up here, just as I have so many times in the past, and feel like writing a letter I cannot write him, because his eyes will not fall upon it; he will not respond, as he always used to with expressions of appreciation. But I want to write, and so I am addressing this epistle to you, not because I know how to write letters—it is one of the things I am gradually being convinced that I do not know, as I said at the opening. And

now, Life Member, Manhattan, is dead and the "Letters from Applehurst" are at an end.

Most cordially yours,

THE END

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